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THE EDITOR

In a month where the Kawasaki Ninja H2R is hogging the media limelight, it's easy to forget the impact the updated BMW S1000RR is going to have next year. Of all the litre sports bikes, this is the one that could have gone another year or two in its current guise and still been competitive with the rest of the sector. As is the norm with BMW, it seems to operate on a slightly different policy to everyone else, the firm's made its bike better when it was already very good. Maybe the engineers could see that Yamaha was going to strike with its new R1 and wanted to stay ahead of the game. Whatever the strategy, we get to benefit as all of a sudden there's a flock of new litre bikes for us to show you and for you to get excited about, and that's never a bad thing.

We've already had a ride on the new BMW, Chris shot out and rode it last week, you can see what he thinks in this issue. We've tried to work something for everyone in this issue, so along with the big boys' toys you'll also see a head-to-head in the 125cc sports bike category. The KTM RC125 looks like the ideal contender for the YZF-R125, you might not think this stuff matters, but remember how excited you got when you found a licence-friendly road test for bikes that you could ride when you were new to riding?

We've also got a bit of an exclusive on Marc Marquez' new biography. His talent is as obvious as his smile and who knows how bright he'll shine in the MotoGP paddock in years to come. Ignore the fact that he's as young as he is and look at what he's already achieved, his book gives real insight into how he has become the kind of rider he is. I hope you enjoy the extract.

Closer to home, I hung around the BSB paddock for the final round of BSB this month. As well as seeing the drama unfold with my own eyes, I also tried my hand at race photography. You can read about that next month; in the meantime, let's all be grateful to the (highly) skilled photographers that contribute to SuperBike every month. It's a lot harder than it looks.

Enjoy the issue.

John Hogan, Editor john@superbike.co.uk



ON THE COVER

P26: Ducati's Superleggera: living up to the hype and the price tag

Pic: Phil Steinhardt

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THANKS THIS MONTH TO:

Sarah and Steve Jordan for a go on their lovely Ducati 853, and MSV for the track time. Steve Forster for letting us have a quick spin on his Ducati Superleggera, you're a superlegend. And everyone else who's helped this month, love you all!

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I thought I'd surprise the post lady this morning

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so I went to the door and put my willy through the letterbox,

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my willy, or the fact I know where she lives.

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BIG TEST

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BMW S1000RR

BMW adds even more power and tech to the S1000RR for 2015



BETTER DO ONE MORE RUN

6PM, BRUNTINGTHORPE, SUPERLEGGERA

The sun was dropping and the clock was ticking on our time with the Ducati Superleggera. Chris heads out for 'one last run' on the most exquisite bike we've seen for a while. Check out the full test on page 26 of this issue to see if it had the legs to match its looks.







BRAD TO THE BONE

PHILLIP ISLAND, AUSTRALIA. 19 OCTOBER 2014

Two of the men in this shot are used to washing the stench of stale champagne from their kit on a Sunday night. For the guy on the left, it made for a very welcome change. Bradley Smith, the little ginger kid from Oxford, deserved every last drop after finishing in third spot at Phillip Island. Rounding out an all Yamaha podium, Bradley may be hitting the stride we all hoped he had. Nicely done!







If @JoshBrookes's riding was as good as his mouth he would have been BSB champion 7 times over.
– Petra Byrne plays it cool.

FRONT END

- NEWS
- NEW BIKES
- PEOPLE
- EVENTS
- FIRST RIDES



KAWA VS KAWA

Kawasaki launches updated Versys 650 and 1000 adventure bikes

Beauty's in the eye of the beholder, but it's fair to say that even the most ardent fan of the old Kawasaki Versys would hesitate to call it a classic stunner. The original Versys, launched back in 2006 sported a curious set of stacked headlights, giving a cyclopsian aspect that jarred the senses. A shame, because behind the quirky looks (easily the closest thing to a bike version of Kryten from Red Dwarf – JH) lurked a very good middleweight do-it-all bike.

So three cheers for Kawasaki, which has given both the 650 and 1000 Versys a facelift for 2015, dumping the nasty vertical headlights in favour of a more pleasing set of horizontal twin headlights. These conventionally-mounted lamps live in all-new, more aerodynamic fairings, with adjustable windscreens. The 650 gets a new front fork, with separate springing and

damping functions (one leg is sprung, the other damped), which will give improved wheel control, as well as a bigger fuel tank, and uprated brakes. The four-cylinder 1000 Versys has a host of detail mods, including a centre stand, a stronger subframe for more luggage, and a new 43mm USD front fork. Prices and availability are to be confirmed, more info: www.kawasaki.co.uk





IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

Ducati shows off new variable valve timing system for 1200 Testastretta engine

Like fuel injection, variable valve timing (VVT) is a technology that was perfected on cars long before it appeared on bikes. And for the same kind of reasons. VVT is good for reducing emissions – something cars have had to do for much longer than bikes. VVT also allows a greater spread of torque – more important on heavy vehicles like cars, and the installation generally takes up vital space in the engine area, again, something cars can spare more of.

As a result, while practically all car manufacturers have taken advantage of variable valve timing technology, there have been few implementations on bikes. Honda's VTEC system isn't a true VVT system – it simply opens two of the four

valves per cylinder at low revs, and all four valves at high revs. But Kawasaki fitted a proper variable valve system to its GTR1400 tourer, albeit only on the inlet camshaft.

But Ducati has revealed its take on the system, in a pre-Milan show press release. The new DVT system – Desmodromic Variable Timing – uses fairly standard methods of operation. The camshafts have a 'variator' – a rotating mount on the end between the shaft and the drive pulley, which can be turned about 20 degrees in relation to each other. Hollow chambers have vanes inside, and when pressurised oil is injected into one side of the hollows, the vanes move, altering the angle between the pulley and the shaft. Injecting the oil into the other side of the vane moves it back again.

The pressurised oil is controlled by the ECU, allowing the engine's 'brain' to

change the timing of the valve opening depending on engine revs, load, gear, and other parameters.

Ducati's system stands out in a few ways – firstly, it's the first variable system used with desmodromic valves. It's also a 'full' system, fitted to both inlet and exhaust cams, allowing variation in both. Finally, being a 'V' engine with two heads, the system uses two variators for each, meaning four in total.

The results are worth it though: Ducati's claiming 160bhp for the new motor, 10bhp more than the old Multistrada 1200S Testastretta engine, as well as an eight per cent cut in fuel consumption. The system also has no extra service burden: there's a major service at 30,000km and that's it. Something else the cars have had much longer than us...

WHY VARIABLE VALVES?

Ducati's new system gives optimal results

Like many things in life, the timing of the valve opening and closing in an engine is a compromise. One of the most important stages is the 'overlap', at the end of the exhaust stroke, when the exhaust valve is just closing and the inlet is just opening. A low-performance, low-revving engine will close the exhaust valve completely before opening the inlet valve, so none of the fresh fuel/

air charge can escape out the exhaust. Conversely, a high-revving high-powered engine will have an amount of overlap – time when both inlet and exhaust valves are opened. That allows more time for the inlet charge to get into the cylinder, at the cost of allowing some fresh charge out the exhaust, increasing emissions and fuel consumption. Variable valve timing lets your engine have the minimal overlap of a low-revving engine at low revs, but then allows the large overlap period of a high performance engine at high revs. No compromise.

AKRAPOVIC LAYS A TRAP!

Akrapovic was testing the waters at Cologne with this new swoopy-trapezoidal end can design. Mr Igor Akrapovic himself designed it, after learning how to use the new CAD software in his spare time... If folk like it, it'll be a new option for the firm's top-end systems. The shape's been designed to optimise gas flow as well as look proper nuts. Let us know what you reckon...





YAMAHA R3 AND MT-07 CAGE

R YOU READY?

Yamaha extends young riders' choice with 320cc mini 'R' superbike

Governments may complain that they have little power these days, but EU rules have certainly driven a lot of new bikes recently. The A2 licence category that limits under-24 year olds to bikes with limited power (and power-to-weight) has spawned a whole range of bikes around the 250-400cc capacity. And here's another! Yamaha's R3 is a smart-looking sportsbike, with a parallel twin 321cc motor, 41.4bhp and 169kg kerb mass. You get ABS as standard, and the chassis is pretty high spec, with 41mm forks, sporty-looking wheels and a 140-section rear. Beefy.

Expect the R3 in time for next spring, price is to be confirmed, but we'd expect it to be on par with the others in its class: £4,500-£5,250.



CAGED ANIMAL?

Yamaha goes stunt crazy with MT-07 Cage

Fair play to Yamaha: it's raised its game massively in the past few years in the street bike sector. First the MT-09 hit the naked nutterbike spot with its wheelie-happy three-cylinder motor and loose-but-likable chassis. Then the MT-07 did the same job on a smaller scale, its natty parallel twin motor kicking that layout's boring reputation into touch.

And now the tuning fork guys have turned things up a notch, bringing out no less than a factory-fresh, street-legal stunt bike.

Okay, the MT-07 Cage doesn't have a thumb brake, a hole in the pillion seat for your feet, or a flamethrower out the exhaust. And there are no skulls on the paint, or bashed-in seats on the fuel tank. But it does come with a smart set of red engine bars, and a tubular under-engine guard. Add in a set of radiator guards, and some knuckle protectors, and you get the bones of a smartly-styled little stunt-replica.

Of course, under all that remains the same 689cc, 75bhp twin naked hooligan – which is as it should be. The Cage should be in the shops before xmas: price to be confirmed, but shouldn't be a lot more than the base bike's £5,349.

MV GETS SERIOUS

The techy gifts kept on coming with these RR versions of the 800cc Brutale and Dragster. All-aluminium forks, a quickshifter designed to work up and down the gearbox, eight level traction control and more power all seem to be ticking the right boxes. We've ridden both of these, so you can expect a full launch report in the next issue. One of the more promising pieces of information that we were handed was the level of investment MV is making over the next few years as it journeys into the marketplace armed with more models, a bigger dealer network and improved service. MV country manager for the UK, Mark Franklin, who recently joined the company after successfully managing the growth of Piaggio in the Far East wasted no time in striking a deal with Close Motor finance to enable more of us to get on more of their bikes. *"At present we have seven dealers throughout the UK, but we plan to grow our supplier network considerably during the next 12 months. We will launch four new products in the next quarter, so this new alliance is great timing as we will have new financial packages in place to help dealers sell out of the 2014 range and get a head start on the 2015 models. Our products are aspirational but pricing through Close Motor Finance makes them affordable so these financial packages are an extremely important commercial tool for our dealers".*

MV is pitching itself as a premium product, one that sits above Ducati, BMW and Triumph. That means it'll be upping its game to reflect the levels of service that wealthy bikers have come to expect. Don't expect to see MV dealers popping up on every corner, but if you do see one, stick your head in the door and take a look around. The firm's got big plans and after spending a couple of days riding the Brutale and Dragster RR, we can safely say that the bikes seem to have made a huge step in the right direction.



SUPER DATES

There's no such thing as a dull day, just dull people. Put these dates in the diary, and you'll be more fun than a truck of ANFO at a Guy Fawkes night.

NOVEMBER

SAT
9TH

FINAL ROUND OF MOTOGP

Valencia, Spain

MotoGP might be decided, but that doesn't mean Rossi, Lorenzo and the boys won't still be racing as hard as ever to spoil Marquez' end of season party. And that's before we get to the nonsense of Moto3 and Moto2. €58 weekend grandstand advance, www.motogp.com

SAT
8TH -
SUN
9TH

BRITISH SUPERMOTO CHAMPIONSHIP

Cadwell Park, Lincs

If Valencia seems a bit too far away, how about the final round of the British Supermoto Championship, held on the mountain course at Cadwell Park. Think you saw some close moves there in BSB? Just wait 'till you see these boys...

£18 weekend advance, £14 race day on the gate.

www.norasport.com

SAT
22ND
- SUN
30TH

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www.motorcycletolive.co.uk

SUN
23RD

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SUN
30TH

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Rednal, Gloucestershire

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www.nmrrc.co.uk



TRIUMPH TIGER GETS TRACTION CONTROL.

The new Triumph Tiger was unveiled at the Milan show. The XR model is the road-going version that we're most interested in, though an offroad-friendly XC version is available as well. Both models will feature cruise control, multi mode riding maps, ABS and traction control. They'll also feature ride by wire throttle technology, all of which can be tailored by the rider to suit their needs. An 'x' version of both models will also be available, offering further levels of adjustability. Four throttle maps will be available, Road, Rain, Sport and Off Road. Riders of the 'x' version will also be able to choose between a Road, Off Road or a programmable rider setting, giving stacks of adjustment. All models will benefit from gearbox modifications thanks to the use of parts from the

Daytona 675 supersport bike.

Work on the internals of the 800cc triple means riders can expect less mechanical noise and a slightly higher rev ceiling at 10,000rpm. Most importantly in this sector is the new and improved tank range: engine improvements and the 19 litre tank mean a theoretical tank range of 272 miles, a fifty mile improvement over the current model.

The XR model will ride on Showa suspension, the gnarly offroad version will be fitted with WP front and rear. Triumph has also worked hard to improve rider comfort over long distances, geometry changes should see less wrist ache and more legroom, the new bodywork should offer somewhere to hide when the weather catches up with you. Owners of the 'x' version will also get hand guards and a screen that you can adjust without having to crack the tools out. Expect to see the new models in Triumph dealers across the land from spring 2015.

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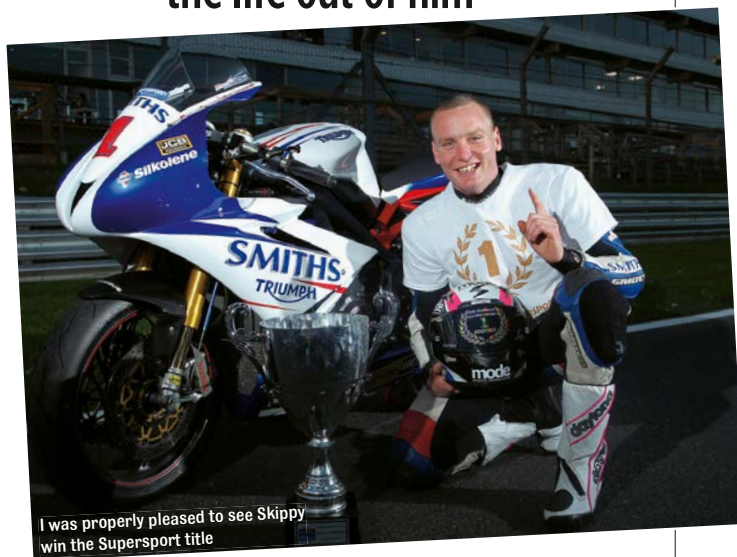
JAMES WHITHAM

“What a weekend we had at Brands Hatch for the final round of BSB. Obviously everyone knows the result now, but I don’t think anyone could have predicted the way it unfolded. I saw Kiyo go down from trackside and didn’t think it was that bad a crash. He maybe hung onto the bike for a little bit too long and I think it was that that sent him into the ground as hard as he did. It was one of them highsides that you only get in conditions like that; relatively low speed in damp conditions. Anyone that’s raced for more than three weeks will have a broken collarbone or two to show for their efforts and Kiyo has had his fair share of injuries in the past. I can remember having the same kind of crashes when I was young and even more foolish than I am now and thinking I’d be able to get on with the job, it was nigh-on impossible on a little 125 two stroke, let alone riding a 200-plus horsepower superbike that weighs a fair amount. When he got up and clung onto his arm I knew straight away that his collarbone had gone, along with any chance of being able to race that weekend.



I was gutted that Kiyo didn't feature in the racing on the Sunday

“Others said they’d have dragged Josh around the paddock and beaten the life out of him”



You’ll all know that in Grand Prix racing, some of the riders appear the next day and are able to race, but that’s because they have their own medical centre that treats riders in a different way to other race paddocks. There was some noise about him possibly getting out to ride on the Sunday, but when I caught up with him and saw the look in his eyes, I knew it didn’t match what he was saying and there was no way he was getting on that bike.

The weekend went to Shakey and rightly so, but it wasn’t without drama behind the scenes. Josh Brookes’ comments in the post race press conference on the Saturday were pretty

pointless. Saying that Shakey had a voodoo hold over the rest of the grid and being able to decide who gets the luck and who gets injured implied that Shane wants other riders to get hurt which is completely untrue and pretty bloody stupid. Shakey kept his cool and got on with the job in hand, even when on the Saturday night Josh Tweeted pictures of Petra (Shane’s wife) from her days as a model. Josh seems to have to hate other riders to be able to get on and race them, but this was a shot below the belt and completely out of order. Everybody has skeletons in their closet and I suppose the paddock is just a reflection of normal life in that sense. Both Shane and Petra responded with a completely professional approach, I think they had the support of the paddock and the general public (looking at the response to the Tweet in question).

I do sometimes wish that there was a little bit more rivalry in some paddocks, these guys are only human after all, but like I said, what Josh did was out of order. Some of the guys that I work with in the paddock said that they’d have behaved like Shane did and kept a lid on everything, others said they’d have dragged Josh around the paddock and beaten the life out of him. Either way what’s done is done and it certainly means that the racing next year is going to be cracking from the word go.



James Whitham is a WSB and BSB commentator for Eurosport. He’s competed in WSB, WSS, BSB and TT and has the trophies and stories to prove it.

@Jimwhit69



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STUART HIGGS

“ Well, we’ve come to the end of another incredible season of the MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship and one that I think will be remembered as arguably one of the best in history.

I write this column after a huge weekend at Brands Hatch; the anticipation for the final round seems to grow every year and in particular we have never had such a historic moment in the championship and probably won’t again for a few years. It was a moment when the title would be decided for a record-breaking fourth time between the championship’s two most successful riders – Shakey and Kiyonari.

The ‘War for Four’ had been building all season between the pair and on Friday it looked like it would go all the way to the wire, but it wasn’t to be and Kiyo’s unlucky crash on Saturday left him with a fractured collarbone. To begin with Kiyo was hopeful that rest on the Saturday would give him a chance to race on the Sunday, especially as Shakey had failed to score with a crash in race one. It was a really tough situation for Kiyo and the team, but one thing is for sure they will no doubt come back even stronger next year.

The technical rules in MCE BSB mean that we have an incredibly level playing field and let’s face it – if you would have been able to place a bet in the Kentagon on Friday night that the first race podium was going to be Howie Mainwaring, Josh Waters and Jon Kirkham with the likes of Shakey and Kiyo not featuring in the results at all you would have left with some good odds and even better winnings!

That’s not taking anything away from those riders, but a dramatic day really saw the championship turned around and congratulations to Howie and the Quattro Plant Kawasaki team as they have worked hard to make that race-winning dream reality. It just shows that’s possible in BSB, compared to other motorcycle racing championships

Stuart Higgs is the series and race director of the MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship

@stuarthiggs 



There was some real needle that also arose over the weekend between Shakey and Josh Brookes too at Brands Hatch – something that I think will spill over to next season and with the prospect of Kiyo back too next season is already building to pick up where we left off at the season finale.

Brands Hatch saw a huge crowd and I don't remember such a fantastic atmosphere since the big WSB events at the circuit over a decade ago. The grandstands were full, the fans filled the banks, and myself and the team take great pride in delivering an event like

“There was some real needle that also arose over the weekend between Shakey and Josh Brookes”

where you have to be in the top one or two teams to stand a chance of a podium.

Shakey sealed the championship in race two but it didn't come easy and you can see how the nerves get to the riders, even the most experienced on the grid, and that shows how badly these guys want it. Something that I feel sometimes is missing from other sports. As I mentioned before it was a huge disappointment for Stuart and Steve Hicken and all of the Buildbase BMW team, but I think seeing how far they have come this season really is a testament to their hard work and dedication and I for one have been impressed with their performances this season with Kiyo. It just shows that in BSB if the team and the right rider click then you can be challenging for the title.

the one we did to end the season.

By the time you read this there will have been some more rider signings for next season, because although the championship ended at Brands Hatch, MCE BSB never really sleeps and we're working even harder to make the championship bigger and better for 2015. We already have new teams coming to the grid, more riders interested in become part of the show and believe me – that first round at Donington Park will come round pretty fast!

I just want to thank all the fans for their support of the championship this season, both at the tracks and through the broadcasts on British Eurosport and ITV as we continue to try and grow our sport and reach new audiences.



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Who wouldn't want to ride around this?



Who the hell is...

CHRIS HERRING

He's head of motorsport at the new Circuit of Wales. He used to babysit world champions at HRC. He's a very busy man

I started out as a motorcycle journalist. I joined MCN as a sports reporter in January 1991. My first job for them was reporting on the Jack Hardacre trial in the Cleveland hills. That led me to the WSB paddock as a journo in '93 and in January '96 I joined Honda as WSB communications manager. I moved across to world supersport in 2003 and worked in a similar role for Honda Europe, and then at the end of 2004 I got the call from HRC asking if I would work for them in MotoGP the following year. I worked in a commercial director role and dealt with everything in the paddock apart from engineering on the bikes. I did four years in MotoGP, was with them when they won 125, 250 and MotoGP titles. There was a lot of success and it was a fantastic time, lots of travel and lots of excitement. I left in 2008 after having spent 15 years in the

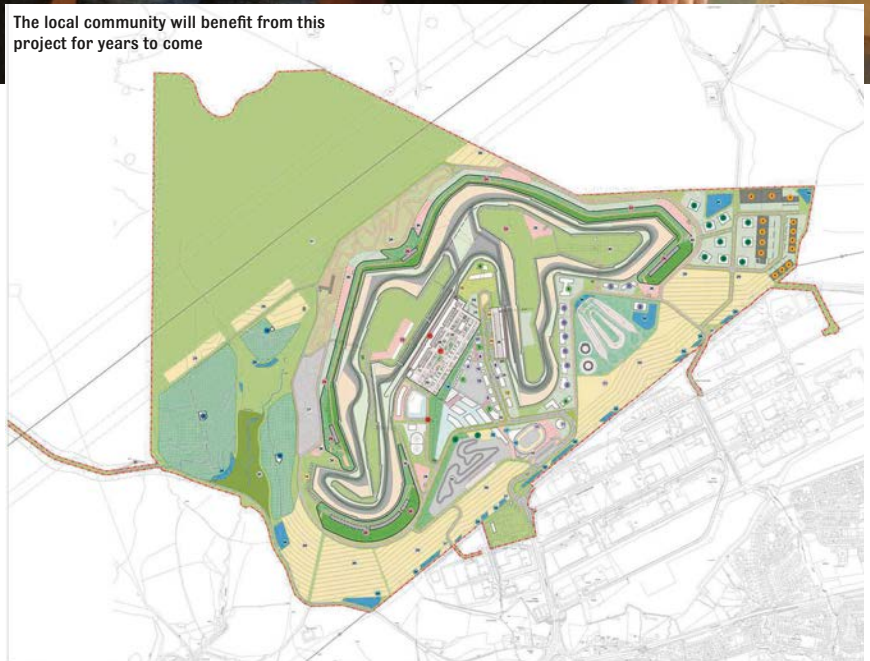
Work starts in January 2015



Chris and old friend Colin Edwards. If they weren't playing golf, they were up the pub



The local community will benefit from this project for years to come



world championship paddock. Eventually I found myself heading out the door to another airport to go to another round and started questioning what I was doing, that was when I knew it was time to move on.

Like most of the best things in Wales, the new circuit was born out of a game of rugby. Peter Thomas (One of the founding partners behind the Circuit of Wales) had to visit Ebbw Vale to discuss funding for a rugby project with the Welsh government, and he casually mentioned the idea of a motor sport facility. That was back in 2009. They were interested, but nervous about the size and potential cost of the project, so then we introduced a chap called Michael Carrick, whose background is financial infrastructure business and the three of us have driven the project from where it started to where it is today.

As the most significant capital investment programme in automotive infrastructure

“The first shovel will be going in the ground in January. We have a lot of blasting to do to get some rock out of the way, but it’s all starting in the New Year.”

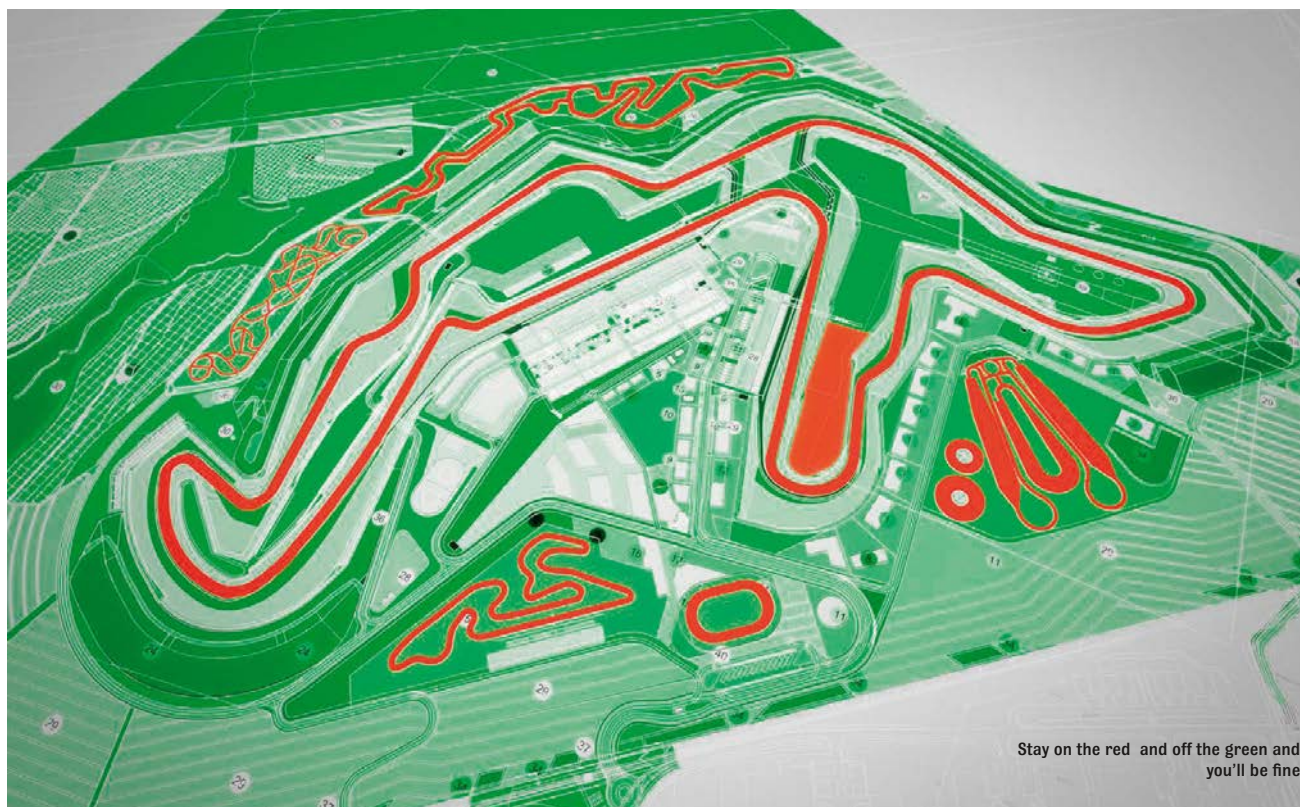
in the UK in the last 50 years, the Circuit of Wales will ensure Wales becomes synonymous with high quality motor sport activity, commerce and entertainment worldwide. The development will be a major addition amongst Europe's front-ranking motor sport facilities and will be designed to host international events such as MotoGP, World Superbikes, World Motocross and World Touring Car.

There's an element of what we're doing that's our business, for now. It's like winning the lottery, if everyone in your local pub knows you've won millions, they'll all hit you with a million different ways to spend a million pounds. We know what we're doing and we're getting on with it behind the scenes. That said, we've worked very closely with the local community, offering them opportunities to meet the development team,

ask questions in an open forum and get a feel for what it is that we'll be adding to the local area with the project.

I've introduced the management team to Dorna and all of the other sporting bodies that we'll be working with. I actually also took a load of senior Welsh councilors to Donington for a round of the World SuperBikes back in 2011, they got to experience at first hand what it's like to be trackside, watching bike racing. It was an interesting day for everyone, but also very important in terms of showing what it is that we want to introduce to the area.

The design and build phase of the project is an ongoing one, even today we've been tweaking designs and finalizing elements of the build. The first shovel will be going in the ground in January. We have a lot of blasting to do to get some rock out of the way, but it's all



starting in the New Year.

The two key things to think about are what the viewer gets and what the spectator gets if they come and watch the racing. The circuit will be one of the longer ones in the UK at 3.3 miles, but rather than being built around an old airfield perimeter road (as are most of the larger UK circuits), the Circuit of Wales will be laid over some really undulating land. It's going to be a real challenge for the riders and that means it's going to be exciting for the viewers. What we're giving people that attend the circuit is an unparalleled experience, one that's designed to give racers a real challenge on track and those watching the best possible



Golf. Some people like it.



chance of enjoying as much of the experience as possible.

There's a new road going in as we speak that'll be complete in the spring of next year, we'll have our own junction from that dual carriageway that takes you straight into the circuit. The circuit will have everything a modern race facility should have; medical centre, industrial units, hotels, MX track, kart track, a dirt oval, a dedicated TV and media area in the purpose-built paddock. We have plenty of space at 830 acres, but we also have plenty to fit in.

The Circuit of Wales will host all of the major global motorsport events on the calendar. Aside from what we're adding to the local community in the way of employment opportunities and growth in the local economy, and aside from being able to add an amazing new circuit to the calendar of any race series, what's most important is the fact that we're guaranteeing the future of Motorsport in the UK. **EW**



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OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE

Words: Chris Northover Pics: Phil Steinhardt

When a bike costs over fifty grand and only 500 will ever be made, the actual performance may not be that high – the exclusivity alone will be enough to sell them. But nobody told Ducati that.

Everything has gone slow motion. It's all blurred, I'm staring down the turbines of a jet parked at the far end of the runway, flanked by streaks of green scoring through my peripheral vision. The speedometer on the Superleggera that gave up with numbers once we hammered through the 186mph mark, now offers '---'; the digital equivalent of a shrug and a 'your guess is as good as mine'. I feel like I can hear every combustion cycle going on beneath me, the exquisite balanced crank allowing the Superquadro motor to violently thrash out a claimed 205+bhp. I feel like I'm in one of those grossly over-produced extreme sports edits. My life drops down to slo-mo at 240 frames per second as the motor kisses the rev

limiter in top gear at a GPS-verified 192.7mph. All that's missing is a drop of ear splitting dubstep noise. At the brochure, the Ducati 1199 Superleggera is the lightest and most powerful production litre sports bike available. On the runway, it damn sure feels like it.

The Superleggera might look like a Ducati Panigale, but only when you delve into the specs do you realise just how different it is. The aim was to put the power and weight on par with a WSB race bike, somehow keeping the bike road legal. You or I will never own one. We'll be lucky to see one in the wild. So here it is, the Ducati 1199 Superleggera; wheelied, ridden flat-out and tested as hard as any other bike you'll see in these pages. Is the Superleggera really that much better than a Panigale R?

What if it's a pig? What if it's no better than the Panigale R? What am I going to say then? You've heard of launch fever right? Where a manufacturer wines and dines the unsuspecting journalist, sticks 'em in a nice hotel, fills them with beer and then holds the test ride of a new bike at a location so exquisite that a three-legged camel would be fun to ride. It's our job not to let that happen, but when a private owner has lent you their limited edition, £54k Ducati to test, a bike that is their pride and joy, what are you supposed to do if it's an overpriced show horse with no balls? It was a conversation I was dreading; returning the SL to its owner Steve and saying, "Yeah, it's nice, but not really much better than the Panigale R. Paint looks cool though..."

I needn't have worried; the Superleggera met my expectations, surpassed them and left me gibbering and climbing back on for one more lap. And then another.

Under the skin

205+bhp. 'Plus' eh? What the hell is that supposed to mean? If ever there was a bigger cop-out in claimed figures; they may as well have just put 'Power: loads'. The power claim for the SL is 200-plus bhp, or 205-plus with the non-homologated Akrapovic exhaust system and associated map that comes with the bike. And who in their right mind isn't going to fit the extra power eh? That'd be like ordering a massive ice cream sundae and only eating the bits you can reach with a normal size spoon. Madness. As for the plus, we're not sure what that's all about either. In our 12-hour period with the bike, we didn't get a chance to strap it to a dyno, opting to get you repeatable numbers instead. Numbers like top speed and 0-100mph. And while we're on the numbers, Ducati claims a kerb weight of 177kg. Which, without fuel puts it at 166kg – that's 2kg below the FIM post-race minimum weight for World Superbike. That is astounding.

Weight watchers

Before we go through how the Superleg is so light,



Chris tries his best arm-waving Italian to communicate with the Ducati. It ignores him

SUPERLEGGERA

"ITALIAN: SUPER-LIGHT"

Superleggera is actually the name of a coachbuilding technique, patented by an Italian firm back in the 1930s. The technique involved making a vehicle from a lightweight framework and stretching thin-gauge aluminium panels over the surface. Several companies licensed this technique, most notably Aston Martin for the DB4. So now you know.

Let me just point out that the standard Panigale is already the lightest litre sports bike by some margin. So we're not talking about the fat kid laying off the cakes and losing a stone, this is a skinny athlete that's managed to get stronger and drop weight. First up for trimming were the fairings. The paintwork in Ducati's racing red colour looks stunning in the flesh and nicely hides the carbon fibre fairings and bodywork beneath. More than just bling, the carbon drops the first kilogram of twelve compared to the Panigale R. While they were in the cupboard marked 'Carbon fibre goodies' the engineers rustled up a carbon fibre rear subframe too, replacing the standard alloy one and dropping 1.2kg. There's no reason a carbon fibre main monocoque wouldn't work, but after the development and rider feel issues Ducati Corse had with the carbon fibre MotoGP project, they've opted for a magnesium alloy main frame, saving another 1.1kg. Magnesium is also employed for the forged and machined wheels, to drop yet another kilo. The Superleggera is covered in components that have been machined from solid, slimmed down or swapped out for titanium to save as much weight as possible. The various small weight savings, along with the lightweight chain and sprockets sum up another 1.3kg of mass shed. Lighter suspension with a titanium rear shock spring knocks another 1.4kg off, while race team pistons and the machined crank take out another 590 grams. The largest chunk of weight loss comes from the exhaust system – now fully titanium and saving two and a half kilos. But in terms of weight shaved for effort applied, the best change is the lithium battery, wiping off 2kg all on its own. The engineer who had the job of lightening the electrical system had a very easy job indeed. Let's hope he kept quiet, spent twelve months drinking coffee and messing about before throwing a lithium battery on the table and taking a bow.

Power to the 500 people

So with a load of weight trimmed, the bike gets the



Just look at that and tell me it doesn't make you go a little bit funny. You can't can you?

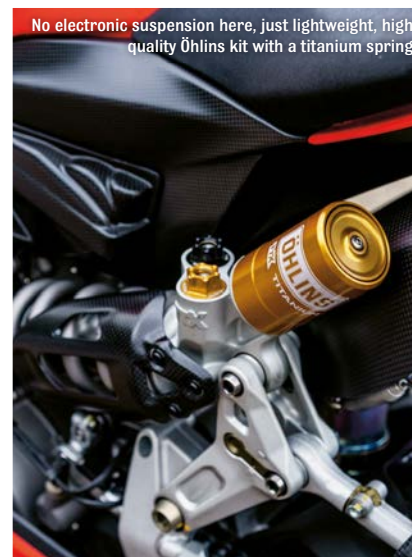
right to use the Superleggera name, but no special edition Ducati would be complete without a power hike. On claimed figures, the SL is 5bhp up on a Panigale R, or 10bhp up if you include the Akrapovic exhaust that comes in the box. That's ignoring the weird "plus" that they've added onto the claimed power. For reference, the last time we dynoed a Panigale, it made 182bhp at the rear wheel, so you would expect this to be over the 190bhp mark. When they've already stretched the V-Twin so far, it's hard to imagine more power coming from the 1,198cc motor without a sacrifice in longevity. But that's forgetting about money. Make things out of more expensive stuff and you can cheat physics, sweet. And when you've got a retail of over fifty grand to work to, there's no need to be penny pinching now is there? The base for the Superleg's engine was the Panigale R motor, complete with fancy titanium conrods. Reaching back into the box of titanium, the standard exhaust valves were junked and replaced with lighter ones to match the Ti inlet ones already in the 1199's motor. This paved the titanium path for more aggressive camshafts to jam more fuel and air into the cylinders. World Superbike-spec pistons with a two-ring design (not three, as standard) reduce friction and drop 94g of spinning weight. The combustion chamber also has different machining resulting in an increased compression ratio of 13.2:1 (versus 12.5:1). More suck, more squeeze, more bang, more blow and who doesn't want that? While everyone who isn't a petrolhead nerd sniggers about that last sentence, we'll move on to the crankshaft. Lightened by 396g, the new crank is actually lighter than previously achieved for the Ducati race bikes. To ensure an engine doesn't shake itself to bits, a crank must be balanced, but if you add weight to do this, you obviously make the crank heavier. Ducati has used tungsten to balance the crank, as it is incredibly dense, allowing mass to be put precisely where it is needed. Ultimately this results in a lighter and better-balanced crank.



Final drive is actually shorter than on the standard Panigale with a two-teeth larger rear sprocket



Bike number 042 of 500. As if I needed another reminder not to drop it.



No electronic suspension here, just lightweight, high quality Öhlins kit with a titanium spring



All we wanted to do was stare at this bike. And do big nasty wheelies. Then stare at it for a bit longer.

All this lightening and strengthening allows more revs and hence more power. To that end, the Superleggera peaks at 11,500rpm, some 750rpm higher than the Panigale. Trust me when I say, those extra revs sound incredible. You want to know the best bit? The service intervals are 7,500 miles, as per the standard 1199, although the valve service now has to be done every 7,500 too; it was every 15,000 miles before. But a pretend WSB bike with 7,500-mile intervals ain't too shabby.

The extras

With all this lightening and speeding going on, it's nice to know Ducati has given normal humans a fighting chance of using the performance by adding wheelie control into the electronics package. The wheelie control, traction control and engine braking control can all now be tweaked as you're riding using new buttons on the left handlebar. The Superleggera also gets lean angle and GPS

logging as part of the DDA+ data-logger, so you can download and see just how far you were from Marquez's ridiculous 63-degree lean angles. You just better hope your local traffic cops don't have the software to analyse the data at the roadside... There's a fancy new Brembo MCS master cylinder with a remote span adjuster and a lever ratio adjuster that allows you to dial more or less power in as you see fit.

We've already mentioned the race kit exhaust that comes in the crate with the SL, but you get a few other nice trinkets too like paddock stands and a sidestand removal kit.

Wheelie time

Let me start with what the Superleggera is not. It is not a spikier, more violent version of the already, frankly unhinged Panigale R. Surprised? Yes, I was too. The Superleggera is exquisite to ride. It feels smoother, better finished and more refined than the R, yet faster and wilder at the same time. The

Ducati 1199 Superleggera £54,000

► Engine

Type: Superquadro V-twin, 4 valves per cylinder, desmodromic valve train, liquid cooled

Capacity: 1,198cc

Bore x Stroke (mm): 112 x 60.8

Compression Ratio: 13.2 : 1

Fuel system: Mitsubishi electronic fuel injection, twin injectors per cylinder, elliptical throttle bodies, ride by wire

Transmission: six-speed gearbox, slipper and self-servo wet multiplate clutch, hydraulically activated, quick shifter

Final Drive: chain, 15T/41T

► Chassis

Frame: monocoque magnesium alloy, incorporating airbox and throttle bodies

Front Suspension: Öhlins FL916 43mm inverted telescopic forks. TiN coated stanchions, fully adjustable, machined and lightened, 120mm travel

Rear Suspension: Öhlins TTX36 side mounted linkage type shock, titanium spring, fully adjustable, adjustable linkage, 130mm travel

Brakes: (F) twin 330mm floating front discs, radially mounted Brembo monobloc Evo M50 calipers, radial Brembo MCS adjustable master cylinder (R) single 245mm disc, two piston caliper

Tyres: Pirelli Diablo Supercorsa SP (F) 120/70-17 (R) 200/55-17

► Geometry

Wheelbase: 1,437mm

Head angle: 24.5 degrees

Trail: 100mm

Seat height: 830mm

Weight (claimed, 90% fuel load, ready to ride): 177kg

Fuel capacity: 17 litres

► Performance

Peak power (Claimed): 200+bhp (205+ with Akrapovic) @ 11,500rpm

Peak torque (Claimed): 134Nm @ 10,200rpm

► Rider Aids

Ride by wire, ABS, TC, engine brake control, wheelie control, quickshifter, riding modes.

fuelling definitely feels better, making fast starts or driving out of slow turns much easier – one area where the R had me on my knees. For my first full speed launch down the runway, I'm pretty nervous. Panigales can be a real handful trying to get a fast start and that's without a '1-of-500' noose



around my neck. Build the revs to 6k, get the clutch to the edge of its biting point and... carnage. But where I'd normally be stamping on the back brake trying to stop it turning itself upside down, I'm looking at an orange light on the dash. An orange light that is apparently keeping the front wheel low and keeping me driving forward. As I tuck in and rattle through the gears, the light's intervention gets less and less, my attention switching now to the shift light. Howling past the peak power of the R, I hold on to the gears right up to 11,500rpm. The sound is incredible, like thunder trying to break its own vocal chords. The Panny yowls on to kiss the rev limiter in top, landing me at the scene I painted earlier. It's fucking intense. I don't like to throw the F-bomb around too much, my Nan reads this you know, but sorry Nan; this bike needs it. The ol' bum dyno is often fooled by lots of noise and a shiny paint job, so I was desperate to get back and check out the data. The Superleggera sure felt like the fastest thing I've ever ridden, but only the logger could confirm. 192.7mph. One hundred and ninety-two point seven miles per hour. Let's throw some other numbers about – BMW HP4 – 187.8 mph, Panigale R 186.7mph. Yeah, this thing ain't just a pretty face and some carbon fibre, it's the real 190-plus-mph deal.

In the interests of, er, science, I repeated the launch with the wheelie control off. Cough, a few times. With wheelie control off, the bike was still easier to handle than the R,


thanks to the smoother, more predictable fuelling, but I had to go for more revs and more clutch slip to try and calm the wheelies. And lots of rear brake. The fastest getaway I ended up with was by using a combination of a little back brake and the wheelie control. I could happily have spent all day racing my shadow in a straight line, basking in the happy glow of 190mph and drinking up that top end power. But I thought it best to stick a few turns beneath the wheels of the most expensive road bike I've ever ridden. Funny how that comes back into the front of your mind as you're about to tip into a bumpy 100mph turn lined with jet planes and discarded buses. The same well-sorted but well-fast feeling that you get in a straight line follows you through the turns on the SL. It's a bike that you just want to ride and ride, flicking it between turns faster and harder every lap, with no resistance from below. Some bikes really let you know when you're pushing them hard, but this one just leans over your shoulder and eggs you on to go harder.

The feedback through the chassis and light weight were enough for me to happily repeat knee down passes on the bumpiest corner I know. The suspension did its best to keep things planted, while feeding back feel from the front tyre that let me know when I was getting carried away. That sort of feel is exactly what you want in a bike that's a) this fast and b) this expensive to repair if you've binned it.

Do I really have to give it back?

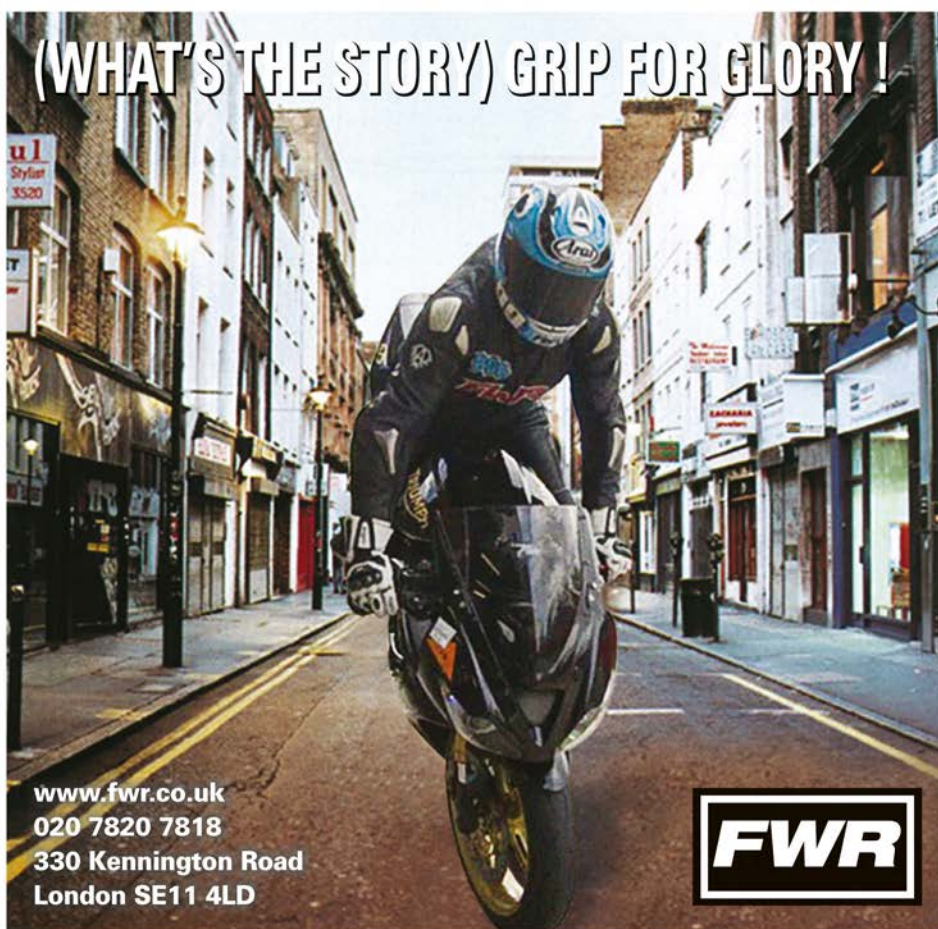
Sat in the van after 16-hours on the go, I should be falling gently asleep and glancing from Armco to Armco.

Instead I'm still wired. The smell of a still-warm Superleggera is seeping through the bulkhead, fuelling 130mph wheelie daydreams and memories of *that* engine sound at 192.7mph. It's amazing to ride such an exclusive bike. It's unbelievable to have all your expectations blown away by both its outright performance and the refined way it's delivered. The Superleggera is the single best production bike I've ridden. It's supremely fast, light, wild enough to make your hair stand on end, but useable enough to ride as hard as you'd like. The biggest shame is that only 500 or so people will ever find out for themselves. And shamefully, most of those won't, instead tucking the bike inside like some kind of carbon fibre ornament. I don't get having nice bikes just as ornaments, but each to their own. But when a bike is this good to ride, it should be a prerequisite of ownership that it sees a sunny Sunday at least once a year. The owner of this bike, Steve, knows what it's for. He's already clocked up 1,000 happy miles and advised me how good the wheelie control is with a big grin. I was happy to hand back the responsibility of such a rare and valuable machine, but I've had a hankering for more time on it ever since. It was the best one-night-stand ever.

If you're reading this and feeling a bit detached, like the performance of a bike that costs as much as you earn in two years isn't really relevant to you, think again. While the wheelie control and headline power figures are reserved for 500 well-heeled buyers now, that technology will eventually filter down onto the more accessibly priced models in the range. Sure, we're unlikely to see full-carbon bodywork on the base model 1199 any time soon, but the technological advances forced into play to make something this special will make it down. And if the standard Panigale, which is a pretty special bike in its own right, can get even halfway across the gap, then everyone wins. Except the other manufacturers, of course. 



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▶ I TOOK BOTH PILLS

Hi John,
I've just got hold of the Ducati 998 'Matrix' bike which was a SuperBike Magazine competition prize in 2003. It was on the front cover and centrefold of the September 2003 issue. I spied it on eBay as an insurance write-off. As a SuperBike magazine fan I remembered the bike. I just could not let it get broken or trashed. My wife was very understanding...!

I'm currently restoring the bike back to its centrefold condition and was wondering how I might find out some more information. What I know so far:

It was a standard yellow 998 BP imported by Ducati London South (Croydon). April 2003. It was then sprayed metallic black (Simon Randle) with graphics copied from the Matrix revolutions film. Film came out in May, Bike painted very soon after May/June.

Stayed in Ducati London South showroom window for at least two months. Given as the SuperBike magazine prize in Sept 2003, registered November 2003.

Do you know who I could talk to to find out more information? Can I get some copies of the original photos from the September 2003 centrefold photoshoot?

Did SuperBike magazine commission the bike? Your offices were in Croydon



then I believe?

Did Ducati approve of the bike? Ducati took until Sept 2003 until they announced the 'official' Matrix bike and even then it was a only a special order. Ducati did not want to promote the 998 any more as they were desperately trying to push sales of the 999 at the time. Demand was such they sold 321 in the end and if this bike had any part to play in this it would be very interesting.

I'm planning to show the bike at the classic shows next year with a bit of a write up. Obviously the connection with SuperBike magazine is central so there's an opportunity for SuperBike flyers/posters if you want.

Fantastic magazine.
Best regards,
Pete Cooper

Fair play, Pete. Great effort saving the bike and best of luck sorting it out. We'll dig out the answers and come back to you for sure. Actually we'll go one better and come round and kick the tyres on the bike while you make us a cup of tea. Cheers - JH

▶ HEADS UP

Chris,
Just watched the video of you drag racing a McLaren and Porsche on the Superleggera. You are a lucky man! :) My son loves the paint scheme and colors on the Shark Helmet you are wearing and curious to know if it is available to the public or if it was a custom one of a kind helmet of yours. I checked the Shark website and searched the Internet to no avail.
Cheers!
Chris Sleater
SLC, UT USA

Hi Chris, yep, it's a custom painted lid - Richard from Rich Art Concepts is the man for

the job. Obviously it's not as cheap as getting standard colors, but hey you've gotta treat yourself from time to time right? Rich is a real nice guy, will work with you on the design and his client list includes half the British Superbike paddock. Just remember if you ask for 'bright colors' you will get them! Real bright colors! You can find him at <http://www.richartconcepts.co.uk> CN



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Beat @alexlowes22 at Rock Paper Scissors twice last night and we won £200 in the casino



@tatiarea

@JoshBrookes not cool Josh. Not cool at all!

@Jackvalentine_1

It's hotting up in the Brands Thistle, they might be pro racers but they're lightweight drinkers! #endofseasonpartytime

@troybaylisstic

Even if it doesn't work out for @jackmilleraus he is the class act in Moto3, he is far from big but the right size for MotoGP

@jonathanrea

The hype built up about the conditions in Sepang for GP is ridiculous. It's a good job them boys don't have to do two races!

@BenSpies11

Just watched Moto3 qp.....They need to start handing out fines in grid positions or money to all the guys in 1st gear down straightaways



BOUNCY BITS

Chris, as I'm sure you're well aware, the weight of a rider is what defines the suspension setup, so, what did you weigh when you found the ZX-6R settings to work well ["How to turn your ZX-6R into a track weapon" – April 2014 issue]?
Regards,
Andrew

Hi Andrew, yep we'll give you that one, although the changes we suggested in the article would vastly improve a ZX-6R 636 on track for riders of any weight (within reason). Don't be sucked into thinking that it's just weight that changes the setup either – a fast, skinny rider will almost certainly need heavier springs than a slow, plump pilot – as usual with suspension there is no cure-all. For reference, I weighed in at a fairly average 70kg (11 Stone) fully kitted. CN

OUT OF STOCK?

Dear the SuperBikes magazine
Great stuff on the Kawasaki H2R last month, loved the look of that thing on the cover! I had to hunt about to find the mag though, my usual shop only seems to have one or two copies each month. Keep up the good work...
Joe, email

Hey Joe, the H2R is a nutty old thing right enough. As to the mag in the shops – if you ask the shop they'll get you one in each month no bother. Or there's always a subscription: get it sent to your door first each month, no grief at all. Details on page 86...AD

IN CHAINS

Hi Chris,
Just reading the latest copy of SuperBike and saw that you'd fitted LighTech chain adjusters. I enquired about these from LighTechUK and was told that they don't do a set for the 2013 Daytona R (I thought 2013 Street Triples and Daytona's shared the same swingarm though). Did you get the ones for Street Triple R?
Thanks
Mat

Hi Mat, ah, bit of confusion here it turns out. The ones we fitted were from a 2011 Daytona; the 2013 has a different swingarm and the 2013 Street Triple has a different one again to that. Although the 2011 chain adjusters aren't technically supposed to fit, it turned out they did go on when I tried it. Give 'em a shout again, tell them Chris Northover from SuperBike sent you! Actually, don't say that, they'll probably charge you double... Let us know how you get on. CN

LEARNER LETHAL

Hey SuperBike guys
Love the magazine, been reading my dad's copies since I was a kid, and now I'm old enough for a bike of my own, winner! My question is, which of the 125s is best, and should I try and get an old de-restricted stroker one so I can get a load more power? My dad just laughs and tells me I should get a 1978 RD125DX or something, he's smoking crack.
Del Watson

Hey Del, your dad's not so far off, the older 1970s 125s were pre-12bhp limit, so they were legal for learners to use back in the day, even though they made like 18bhp, woo! It was a two-stroke twin, amazing



stuff. Good luck finding one, and we don't even think they're eligible for learner use now anyway. Check out our 125s test on page 48 for the word on Yamaha's newest 125...AD

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TOO MUCH IS NEVER ENOUGH

The S1000RR was hardly lacking in pace, but just in case BMW has given it more power, less weight and more electronics to control the madness. Is that really what we want?

Words: Chris Northover **Pics:** BMW Motorrad



es. Well obviously it is, who could possibly say no to another 6bhp and a 4kg weight reduction? Not me. The new S1000RR excites us massively. Not just because it's a redeveloped, refined and resurgent S1000, but because it's only been a couple of years since the last fancy new BMW sports bike (the HP4) was launched. It feels like the glory days of regular updates to the sports bike class are back. And far from a mild face-lift and a less-attractive exhaust, the S-thou has been subjected to a proper revamp. The only people who are going to be unhappy are those who just bought a HP4...

Where to start? Do I go for a first person account of how it felt holding the new bike against the stop in fourth gear, painting a fat black line between apexes as the micro-adjust traction control did its thing? That was nice. Or how about feeding gears through the quickshifter on the back wheel at 120mph? That bit about the new bike rocks too. Or maybe I could go a bit more abstract and talk about the things I found to do with my left hand, now redundant as the clutch isn't needed to downshift? Tell you what, I'll go for the 'make everyone hate me' option where I rolled in sweating from my final session of the day and had a cold beer in my hand before I could even get my helmet strap off. They know how to look after you at a BMW launch. But even if they'd kicked me in the nuts and thrown me straight onto a cheap flight home, I'd still have been grinning like an idiot. The old S1000RR was a damn fine bike, the HP4 was simply stunning and, guess what, this one is a cracker too. When you've got sane, gravity-fearing road riders smearing Pirelli out of every turn around a racetrack, you know a bike is doing a good job of making ridiculous power easy to deploy. And that's the key here – the big beemer was never lacking in power, but as well as adding more, the engineers have made it

easier to use all of it. More speed for more people.

Control is nothing without power

To keep headline whores and bench-racers happy, the new bike gets a boost in power, up 6bhp to a handy 199bhp. They were keen to point out at the launch that their claimed figures are realistic, repeatable numbers, not the inflated data that you find in certain other manufacturers' brochures. We do see a healthy variation in power figures and, in fairness, the BMWs we've tested have all been pretty close to their claimed power. Remember that the 199 will be a crank figure, so rear wheel horsepower will be closer to the 190bhp mark. Keep your eyes peeled next year for confirmation and a guide to getting that magical 200 rear wheel ponies. Now the first thing you'll no doubt do when you look at the pictures is, like us, turn your nose up at the exhaust. It might look like a backwards step from the short, slash-cut one and, in styling terms, it is. But in the same way that we can forgive Marquez for crashing on slicks in the wet because he's so fast the rest of the time, that exhaust makes up for its appearance with its performance. Almost three kilos lighter, and one of the modifications that help boost the power and fill out the torque curve – doesn't look so ugly now does it? And that's without BMW chucking a load of titanium at it – it's still made from stainless steel so there's no fifteen hundred quid bill the first time you drop it or bump off a high kerb. Stood on pit wall listening to bikes flying past on track, there ain't much wrong with the noise it makes either, especially as they slide through gears on the quickshifter.

The aim of the engine improvements was to make more power, but also to get a wider spread of power with an improved

torque curve from 5,000rpm onwards. To achieve this, the inlet and exhaust ports have been re-profiled, along with the inlet cam, and lighter inlet valves are dropped in. Switching to full ride-by-wire (the last bike still used a cable from the twist grip) has made room for a larger, more efficient airbox. This in turn is fed with high speed air and bewildered insects by a larger intake in the front fairing. The electronic throttle also means you can have cruise control – not so useful on the track, but handy for motorways and long 30 or 40mph limits.

The outcome of all this fiddling, is that the bike feels faster from the moment you roll out of pit lane. Or in real life, the moment you get to that magical national speed limit sign at the edge of town. The power is so good from 9,000rpm onwards that I kept finding myself short-shifting at around 12,000rpm with plenty of revs to spare. The launch location was the Montebancho circuit in Spain – a stinking big straight linked together by a series of tight corners and chicanes. Throughout the tight stuff, second gear was a strong theme, occasionally sneaking up to fourth for the odd fast sweeper. From right down low in the revs, the bike would pull cleanly, coming on really strong as you passed the 9k mark. On the big straight, when you let it rev right past the 13,500rpm peak power, shifting just before a frankly ridiculous 14,200rpm rev limit, the new bike absolutely flies. For the twelve-ish grand the base bike will cost, nothing will touch this in a straight line.

Control freak

To prevent every over-exuberant customer firing themselves into the scenery, the S1000RR has always featured a pretty comprehensive electronics package. The new model goes frankly nuts with the

tech, especially if you start ticking the options boxes. The test bikes we rode had all the available options on them, we'll cover what comes as standard later. Take a peek at the dash, and there's enough information to confuse Spock on there. Some of it is really cool, like the recorded maximum lean angle and highest traction control intervention. Some of the info is a bit random; we've no idea why you'd want to know the inlet air temperature and some of it you'll never get a chance to look at – like the live lean angle read out. Here's a tip – if you've got time to be checking out your lean angle or deceleration while you're riding along, you're not riding hard enough. The Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) system has been re-worked and reconfigured to give more stability and safety on Rain and Road modes (read earlier intervention and fewer skids). In Race and Slick mode the DTC has been tuned for more performance, letting you push harder before it steps in. As with the HP4, in Slick mode you can toggle up or down by seven steps each way to get more or less intervention from the system. Starting from the middle, I found myself dialing traction control out on the Pirelli Supercorsa SP road tyres to get more slide until they were really worn. Once the tyres were cooked, the S-thou was a bit of a handful and you could feel the traction control and dynamic damping control fighting to keep the thing moving forward. After a couple of laps of bar shaking madness, it finally occurred to me to dial in a bit more traction control and whaddya know, the problems went away.

In the afternoon the bikes were fitted with slicks, presumably as a reward

CHASSIS

The frame has been revised for better traction and less weight with a 3mm lower swingarm pivot and a 15mm longer wheelbase. Aerodynamics have been improved for better cooling, less pressure on riders' arms and to get more air into the airbox. There's a bigger screen to hide behind too.





for us being good little road testers in the morning. With the extra grip the S1000RR really comes to life, letting you work the engine hard out of turns without having to lean constantly on the traction control. I ended up in slick mode with traction dialed down by 4 stages, letting it slide enough to hold a good line, but not so much that I wanted to hide behind the barriers. One of the biggest changes is the inclusion

of a new riding mode called 'User'. Contrary to what the name suggests, it is not a mode for those with a drug problem or commitment issues in relationship. User mode lets you customize all the electronic assistance that is preset in the other four modes. So if you like the soft throttle response of Rain mode, but want the lower engine braking control of Slick mode, you can have it. The list of tuneable

options includes throttle response, torque, ABS, traction control, wheelie control and the damping stiffness of the DDC system. There are a couple of other new additions to the electro-armoury that make us particularly excited. The launch control from the HP4 makes every set of traffic lights twice as much fun, but the real fun comes with the pit lane speed limiter. Yep, that rraarp-bup-bup-bup-bup of a race bike cruising down pit lane at exactly 60km/h will be coming to a high street near you. It's pointless, childish and we bloody love it. Just don't be a dick and do it through villages at 4am.

Still more tech

There's so much technology in this bike, I'm boring myself talking about it all, but stick with me, we're almost done. And the next bit is one of the best rider aids to filter down from race bikes since performance traction control: clutchless downshifting. We're all pretty used to the idea of a quickshifter allowing full-throttle gear changes up the 'box, but until now we've all been pulling in the clutch to get back down again on track. Sure, a well-timed foot can change down without the clutch, but try doing that at high rpm while braking hard and you'll be on a one-way trip to highsidesville; population: too many. The S1000RR's catchily-titled 'Gear Shift Assist Pro' handles everything for you both up and down



ENGINE

Torque is up 1Nm to 113Nm and spread thicker – there's over 112Nm all the way from 9,500rpm to 12,000rpm. Juicy. Max power is 199bhp at 13,500rpm, but if you want you can carry on screaming all the way to 14,200rpm. And scream you will.

the box, all you gotta do is prod the lever. On the downshifts the system blips the throttle to get the gear to shift and deals with the engine braking at the same time. You might not realize how much help this is until you try one on track – when you're riding hard, one less thing to think about is always a benefit. With this, you don't have to think about your clutch hand and you don't have to blip the throttle; just brake, tap down the gears and get on with being awesome. Sweet. The lever feel does take a little getting used to as it isn't as positive as a normal gear shift, but it's no big deal, especially given the freed up brain power. The final piece in the new gear-shifting puzzle is the ability to run reverse-shift on the standard rearsets, if that takes your fancy. It's not that flash and it doesn't cost much for BMW to include, but it's a nice, well-thought-out touch. That's the kind of attention to detail that lets you know the people who design these in the week are out doing skids on their own ones at the weekend. I don't know about you, but that makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

I did find a chink in the straight-line armour of the new S1000. Under admittedly harsh track use, I managed to get the brakes to fade and the lever back to the bars. Not so good. It's the same feeling I've had before on the current S1000RR – the lever position does move as the brakes heat up and then, if you keep pushing hard, eventually the lever begins to move closer to the bars. The remote span adjuster available in the HP accessory catalogue would help, but it's still not something you want to have to think about.

Handle it

Enough talk of digital trinkets and witchcraft riding aids; there still needs to be a nice solid lump of absolutely real and not-in-the-least imaginary aluminium holding things together for a bike to work. No clever programming, no ECU overlord controlling your inputs – just a

lump of proper engineering and carefully developed geometry. And develop they have. The S1000RR has a new chassis, refined and developed to tune the stiffness and geometry for better feel and grip. And we can all relate to that. The front end has been pushed and pulled about to give a 0.5-degree steeper head angle, and 2mm shorter trail, all in the name of improved feel from the front tyre. On track, I have to say the Dynamic Damping Control clouded this, making it tough to call on an improvement either way. The new bike certainly steers well, better than the old model particularly in changes of direction. This is also helped by a 5mm increase in ride height and slightly wider handlebars. But on corner entries, I found myself constantly having to re-learn how I dealt with feedback from the bike. Where the DDC optimizes the damping to any situation, it makes the bike react in a different way to a bike with normal suspension. When you're talking about having to compromise setup to deal with differing speed, surface and riding conditions, this is a brilliant solution. But when you're trying to push yourself and the bike as hard as possible on track, it requires a little extra faith to trust the system and perhaps not your instincts developed and honed on conventional suspension systems. For example – I was trying to improve my corner speed through turn three at Montebelario; my usual technique involves reducing braking pressure a little earlier and letting the bike run into the turn. On the new S1000RR, it felt like the front was a little vague and wanting to run wide, discouraging me from pushing harder. When I made myself brake later and run into the turn hotter, it felt fine, as if I'd imagined the vagueness earlier. The outcome was the same: I went faster, it was ace; but it took me a little more commitment to the electronics to get there. As technology is evolving, it seems our riding techniques and approaches need to evolve too. But hey, if it means we get to





go faster and do more skids, I'm in.

What do I get?

In the UK we'll get two versions, the standard S1000RR and the Sport, costing about twelve and fourteen grand respectively. Sorry for the vagueness, but full prices will be confirmed at Motorcycle Live, late November. Or sooner if we can find any incriminating pictures of the BMW PR guy. The standard bike gets stability control (a safety-, not performance-orientated TC system), Rain, Sport and Race riding modes and Race ABS. If you cough the extra cash for the Sport, you get the full complement of riding modes, Dynamic Damping Control, the clutchless

downshifting system and stripes on your wheels. Oh and heated grips, natch.

Conclusion

From its ability to paint black tyre marks over the exit of every turn, regardless of rider skill, to the sheer speed and power of it, the new BMW S1000RR is a seriously good bike. It's hard to see what could top it next year, but we're going to have a lot of fun putting that to the test. There have been a hell of a lot of changes made from the old bike, too many to list without turning this into a BMW spec sheet. The electronics are now more advanced, more customisable and easier to adjust. Anyone who's

BMW S1000RR [Sport]

£12k approx [£14k approx]

► Engine

Type: 999cc, liquid-cooled, inline four, DOHC with rocker arms

Bore x Stroke (mm): 80 x 49.7

Compression Ratio: 13.0 : 1

Fuel system: Electronic fuel injection, ride by wire

Transmission: six-speed, wet slipper clutch, cable actuation

Final Drive: Chain

► Chassis

Frame: Aluminium cast and welded bridge frame

Front Suspension: 46mm inverted fork, fully adjustable, 120mm travel [Electronic damping control]

Rear Suspension: Linkage type monoshock, fully adjustable, 120mm travel [Electronic damping control]

Brakes: (F) Twin 320mm discs, radial four-piston calipers, radial master cylinder (R) Single 220mm disc, single piston caliper

Tyres: Pirelli Supercorsa SP (tested) (F) 120/70-17 (R) 190/55-17

► Geometry

Wheelbase: 1,438mm

Head angle: 33.5 degrees

Trail: 96.5mm

Seat height: 815mm

Weight (claimed, full fuel load, ready to ride): 204kg

Fuel capacity: 17.5 litres

► Performance

Peak power (Claimed): 199hp@13,500rpm

Peak torque (Claimed): 113Nm@10,500rpm

► Rider Aids

ABS, TC, riding modes, ride-by-wire
[Shift Assist Pro, DTC, DDC]

been frustrated trying to do something that their TC or ABS won't let them will appreciate that, I know I did. The motor makes more peak power, has a noticeably wider spread of power and more torque throughout the midrange, where you can use it. Among the long list of new features are gems like clutchless downshifting and launch control. Both of which work well, make riding more fun and help you go faster: always a win. I was surprised when the brakes fell short on track, especially when the rest of the bike excels like it does. But I must add some perspective – it was 30°C and the bikes were doing back-to-back 20-minute sessions on a track with repeated hard braking zones. You're unlikely to get the brakes back to the bars at a track day, but you might see some lever movement if you're pushing hard. My resounding impression of the new S1000RR was that it would almost certainly make you faster. Up to a point. And that point is at Superstock racing levels of speed, where the DDC system started to do stuff that I wasn't used to feeling. Of course, at this point, you simply reach into the BMW HP Parts drawer and pull out the HP race kit. A kit that lets you customize every conceivable parameter on the bike, dialing in the setup corner by corner for any given track. The new age is here; it's wearing glasses, carrying a laptop and it will make you faster. **57**



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ON THE BLOWER

Kawasaki's supercharged H2R has been sweeping the Internet and magazine pages with rumour, intrigue, speculation and sheer nonsense. So we asked the two best forced induction men in Britain what they thought of the new beastie...

Words: Alan Dowds **Pics:** Kawasaki

It's fair to say that the new Kawasaki H2R is the most exciting new bike released by a manufacturer in a long time. Indeed, we're struggling to think of the last time an entirely-new type of engine last appeared in a bike. Sure, we love things like Aprilia's RSV4, Ducati's Superleggera, and Yamaha's cross-plane crank R1. But nothing from the past thirty years has had the audacity of a proper, full-bore supercharged litre superbike. Has it?

But we're not going to get too carried away. Firstly, because we've not seen the road version yet, and secondly because it's our job to be cynical and ask tough questions. With that in mind, we've gone to some proper grown-ups, and asked them all about the new bike. Sean Mills of Big CC Racing is no stranger to these pages - he built our very own 280bhp supercharged Suzuki B-King back in 2009. Ditto Richard Albans from TTS Performance, who built the 300bhp supercharged Triumph Rocket III that we nearly flipped back in 2006. Between them, they've turbocharged and supercharged more bikes than you could wheelie an H2R at. But if you forced them to take sides, Sean is probably a turbo man and Richard is probably a supercharger man...

Bearing in mind they've only got the press pics we've all seen so far and the limited tech info Kawasaki has released, we asked them both some questions about the H2R. Here's what they reckon...

What would you have done differently?

Sean Mills: "I'd have stuck a turbo on it with adjustable boost control from 230hp up to 350hp on pump petrol, plus the ability to make 450bhp on race fuel."

"It could use a chargecooler system, using water channels in the intake plenum to cool the boosted inlet air down. That can be very compact but needs a small radiator to work with it to lose the heat. The downside is weight. There's no room on a bike like that for a simple air-air intercooler without blocking the radiator."

Richard Albans: "Are we sure it hasn't got a charge cooler? If it hasn't then that the first thing I would design."

Will it need any special servicing?

SM: "It seems to me that most of the H2R versions will be bought by collectors and put in glass boxes, so they won't need any servicing other than a bottle of polish!"

RA: "The supercharger gearbox is just that, so it requires no different oil than the quality motorcycle oil you would always use."

What would be the tuning options you'd look at first?

SM: "Exhaust improvements on the road version for sure as they will be very plugged up to keep the noise down, then air filter mods as per a normal road bike. ECU hacking may be possible or Power Commander options to fine tune fuelling."

"Extending the rev limit may be possible, and will unleash more power as this is a centrifugal supercharger that increases boost with rpm. Also, changing the ratio of the charger may be possible by replacing the gears with different ratios. Finally, better-flowing or larger impeller wheels may become available."

RA: "If it's the road bike we are talking about here then tuning would be to up the boost some way towards what they have on the race bike possibly. Perhaps tuning would be more about sharpening things up a little, so more power was put down to the rubber."

What problems would Kawasaki have had to overcome to make it a production bike?

SM: "Reliability is the biggest problem, making the supercharger reliable - some other makes of this type have been questionable. Passing noise restrictions while getting the power from it will have been hard: supercharged bikes are naturally noisier than turbo bikes, and they don't like restrictive exhausts as they cause cylinder overheating."

"Back to the charge cooler - this type of supercharger makes horrendous heat without chargecooling and that can promote pre-ignition. So without a chargecooler, inlet air temperatures might be too high. Finally, there will still be speed restrictions on the road due to tyre rating versus vehicle weight."

RA: "I don't think there are any problems in making it a production bike. I would think the biggest hurdle would be finding an oil seal for the impeller shaft that wouldn't burn up at 130,000 rpm. It has to keep the gearbox oil at bay. I know that even PTFE seals burn up at those sort of speeds, this could still be the Achilles' heel of the design."

How will Kawasaki make it rideable, considering the short chassis?

SM: "Probably with power control on the ride by wire butterflies and ignition control. This style of supercharger is a bit subdued anyway as the power is gradual with the rpm so it won't be bonkers. People who fit these types of chargers are the kind that want to go a little faster but not too fast as that might be scary. *Wizard of Oz* was probably their favourite horror film, a shandy is their favourite drink and linear power delivery their favourite catch phrase..."

RA: "I would think even with the rpm the engine is pulling it will be making 30-40% more torque than any present NA 1,000cc engine. Somewhere north of 100ft/lb, then it's got to have some Ride by Wire throttle reduction, traction control, wheelie control electronics. I'm sure Kawasaki will make it very diluted over its full potential."

Why do you think they used a supercharger and not a turbo?

SM: "Because 'S' comes before 'T' in the alphabet?"

RA: "This type of supercharger is very like our Rotrex unit and it delivers instant power with a very linear build which makes it easier to control, even more so than normally aspirated, definitely an easier option to offer a customer than a turbo. Turbos always seem to have this piece of elastic on the throttle where you never seem to get quite what you want when you want, that's not acceptable on a proper road bike, or circuit bike for that matter."



Charge-cooling is the focus of our men here, or rather the apparent lack of it. We know, it keeps us awake at night too...



Sean Mills loves turbocharging so much, we've had to stop leaving press bikes any where near him or he starts measuring them up like a cannibalistic tailor.



If it's anywhere near as aggressive to ride as it is to look at, we'll all be needing a hug. But Sean and Richard think it'll be fairly well tamed.

What else strikes you about the bike?

SM: "The frame is made in tube because they don't intend to make many and that reduces tooling costs compared to a complicated cast aluminium frame."

So, would you buy one?

SM: "I'd rather buy a GSX-R1000 or earlier ZX-10R with less electrical shit on it, and have it turbocharged. Then get the chassis modified to slaughter the H2, which would be a lot cheaper. Plus, you won't be afraid to ride it and devalue it! Typically a 250hp ZX-10R tune would ride in ride out for £6,000 and a 250 to 400hp version with full engine work would roll out at maybe £8,000."

RA: "I want to get hold of one so I can design the first charge cooler for it. There's room in the plenum, it would be a challenge to find room for a radiator at the front, but I'm up for it!" **SB**

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RETRO RIDES

MV AGUSTA F4 312RR

With Kawasaki's H2R threatening to tear up the rule book on top speeds, we look back to the last time a bike claimed to beat the 186mph 'gentleman's agreement' on top speed.

Words: Alan Dowds Pics: Milagro

I've always had a bit of a soft spot in my heart for MV Agusta. But like the fantastically gorgeous supermodels we used to have in the SuperBike studios on a regular basis, I had little desire to live with one. Well, okay, maybe at the weekends.

Joking aside, all the Agustas I've ever ridden have been largely the same: fantastic to look at, and great to ride in perfect conditions – but a bit lacking in the old real world stuff. Which is probably as it should be. Just as you wouldn't get Kelly Brook round your house to do the ironing, it's best not to buy an MV Agusta F4 to go commuting on.

And of all the MV Agustas not to sully with real world considerations, surely the F4 312 RR was top of the list. Launched back in early 2007, it was a no-holds-barred full beans iteration of the 1,000cc F4 that had been around for a few years. But this one had even more power, thanks to a top-end overhaul, larger titanium valves and lumpier cams. The fuel injection setup had fatter 48mm bodies, and an ECU that switched out of 'road-legal' emissions mode over 120kph to richen things up and give more power. The chassis was mostly unchanged, except for some lightweight forged rims and even fancier Brembo monobloc calipers up front. And 312? That was the claimed top speed in kph: a round 193.868mph.

Agusta launched it at the nearest brain-out super-fast track to the factory, which was Monza. Dripping in history, heritage, and, lets face it, racing death, Monza is less batshit-crazy than it used to be, but still offers plenty of fuck-off fast straights upon which to go nuts.

Which we duly did of course. The launch got off to a damp start, which calmed my ardour for the first session or two (I'd slipped off in the damp on a previous visit here and was keen not to repeat this). But once the Pirelli Supercorsa Pros were warmed up and a clean line appeared on the Tarmac, it was bombs away. The new Brembo brakes earned their corn at Monza's death-reducing chicanes, hauling the £15k missile down from speed with aplomb. And, sure enough, the MV was stupendously fast on the way out again, down the enormous straights.

A claimed 183bhp was a healthy dose of ponies back in 2007 – it still is now. Was it enough to get you the wrong side of 300kph? Hmmm. On the right day, with a tiny pilot, the correct



Contact | Three Cross Motorcycles
01202 823344

It's the question every rider of a sportsbike has been asked, normally by the small boy from next door: 'How fast does it go mister?' You can bang on about mass centralisation, dual-speed damping adjustment and controlled frame flex all you want. But all we Johnny cares about is how many emm pee aitch the bright red rocketship you're unchaining from the ground anchor can hurl you at the horizon with. It's childish, irresponsible and irrelevant – but then isn't that a big chunk of what bikes are all about?

MV Agusta isn't a particularly childish outfit – but it's given in to temptation here, and actually named a bike after its top speed! Yep, should you be lucky enough to have a new F4 312R in your garage, you can answer Johnny by simply

pointing to the graphic on the seat unit. 312kph, or around 194mph is the top speed Agusta reckons the latest version of its 1,000cc superbike can manage, and that's the number of this beast.

So, for a northern Italian firm that's hooked on 'heritage', there's only really one track to visit to present its new super-fast sportster. That's Monza, the amazingly evocative Milanese track that's located inside a large park on the outskirts of the city. Imagine a full-bore Grand Prix track in London's Richmond Park, or in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park, and you're getting the idea. Monza was originally built in the early 1920s as a fuck-off fast track with massive straights and minimal run-off. Even the stone-age cars and bikes of the time soon got too fast for the

place though, and there followed a pattern of terrible accidents then heavy mods, until we reach the fairly safe track of today, where three pretty severe chicanes slow you down almost to a stop before you launch yourself into orbit again.

Damp enthusiasm

We're hovering about the red-carpeted pit garage now, nervously watching the damp track slowly drying out. One of the downsides of Monza's gorgeous parkland setting is that there are trees everywhere, whose shade and dropped leaves lend an extra slippery sheen to the high-speed tarmac. The line of shiny F4 312Rs in pitlane looks very pretty, but the thought of unleashing the 183bhp each one contains, through the tread-light Pirelli Supercorsa, onto that slick



Classy dash is also featured on the 'unchanged' list. Looks ace, but is falling behind in terms of functionality compared with the likes of Ducati's 1098

“The riding position feels awkward and top-heavy at low speeds but commanding and positive at full chat.”



There's nothing new about the 50mm upside-down Marzocchi front fork or the dual-speed damping adjustable Sachs rear shock. But they're more than up to the job ahead of them. Footpegs use a clever eccentric adjuster to alter position



the F4 a big old handful of gas.

And we're off. Launched out of the first chicane like the proverbial scalded cat, I remember that the next corner – Curva Grande – opens out beautifully, so I accelerate gracefully round and onto the short-ish straight before the second chicane. I know I have at least a touch of heat in the Pirellis now, but the Variante della Roggia is an even more

confounding chicane. So it's another ham-fisted flick-flack then onto the Lesmo curves, and the next, kinked straight down under the bridge and up. This is the dampest part of the track, and a quick glance at the speedo shows that the MV very quickly hits the far side of 150mph, bringing my braking point forward to just after the bridge. The third



Although it was the 312's new white and black paint scheme that attracted all the attention on the launch, it's the classic red and silver which will sell the most

LAUNCH TEST MV AGUSTA F4 R312

chicane is much nicer, with a pretty clear line through, and then we're on the back straight, heading for the legendary Parabolica curve back onto the massively long front straight.

We're out for around 20 minutes, so there are another eight or nine laps. The process of bedding myself back into the track, and the stress of dealing with the wet-but-drying surface, means the bike impressions have taken second place. But back in the

pit garage nursing yet another caffeine speedball, I'm impressed with the F4. Sure, it's an 'onery, hard-edged grump of a bike in some ways. But on the other hand, for a 183bhp lump, the fuelling and power delivery of the now-elderly motor is remarkably civilised – seemingly much less brutal than a ZX-10R, say. The unchanged chassis will be familiar to anyone who's ridden any F4 – the plush suspension, rock-solid front end and communicative front brakes

all get top marks. And although Monza's layout is less testing of a bike than, say, Mugello or Valencia, I've still gained enough from the first session to be massively looking forward to the second, now-dry session.

Flicking the switch

There's a switch in my head that's marked 'confidence'. It's been firmly in the 'off' position all morning, the damp surface and my previous form at this track keeping

me firmly in the slow group. But now the sun's out, the tyres are still warm from the previous session, and the track is totally dry. My visor clicks down, the gearshift clicks into first, and my confidence switch clicks up to 'on'.

Now, the chicanes are a minor inconvenience, rather than a slippery adversary. The first one is dispatched with ease, and I'm slingshotting round Curva Grande hard on the gas, concrete wall flashing past me on the way to

Specifications

Price: £14,750 (£14,050 for £4.1k Mo los, group 17)

Engine

Type: 16v, 16v, inline four

Displacement: 1010cc

Bore x Stroke: 76.0x50.0mm

Compression: 13.5:1

Configuration: 11.0mm throttle bodies

Gearbox: 6 speed, chain

Power: 135bhp @ 12,000rpm

Torque: 84.0lb ft @ 10,000rpm

Cycle Parts

Chassis: 61mm steel tube trellis subframe

Swingarm: plates

Shock absorber: 41.5mm Marzocchi RAC HSB

Forks: fully adjustable 40mm Marzocchi

Fully adjustable, high/low speed compression

adjustment

Brakes: 31.8mm 32mm disc, four piston

radial mount Brembo calipers 10.2mm disc

rear piston caliper

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MV AGUSTA F4 R312

ENGINE
Basic F4 1000 R engine gets a top-end overhaul to increase revs and broaden the power band. Titanium inlet valves are larger – up to 30mm from 29mm, yet they weigh just 17.8g each compared with the steel items' 27.6mm. Their springs are also stronger. Meanwhile, the cams have increased lift and duration – inlet camshaft lift is up to 10.3mm from 9.2mm, exhaust is up to 9mm from 8.5.

SUSPENSION
Unchanged suspension comprises a fully adjustable 50mm Marzocchi RAC (Road Advanced Component) fork, and Sachs rear monoshock with high/low speed compression damping adjustment.

FUEL INJECTION
Inlet trumpets are 10mm shorter, which further boosts top-end power, as do the new 48mm throttle body diameters, up from 46mm. A new Magneti Marelli 55M ECU controls injection and ignition, as well as the EBS (Engine Brake System) that feeds fuel and air to

cylinder two to improve stability under hard deceleration. Euro III regulations mean there's now a closed-loop lambda sensor set up, and a secondary bypass system that enriches fuelling past 120kph, to give better fuelling once outside the emissions-measuring speed limits.



The brakes are simply astounding, with an impeccable mix of initial bite and progressive, inexorable power.



FRAME

Unchanged steel tube trellis with aluminium swingarm plates and single-sided aluminium swingarm

WHEELS

Forged aluminium Brembo 'Y' spoke wheels.

TYRES

Pirelli Supercorsa F rubber, with a high-profile rear to increase contact size in corners.

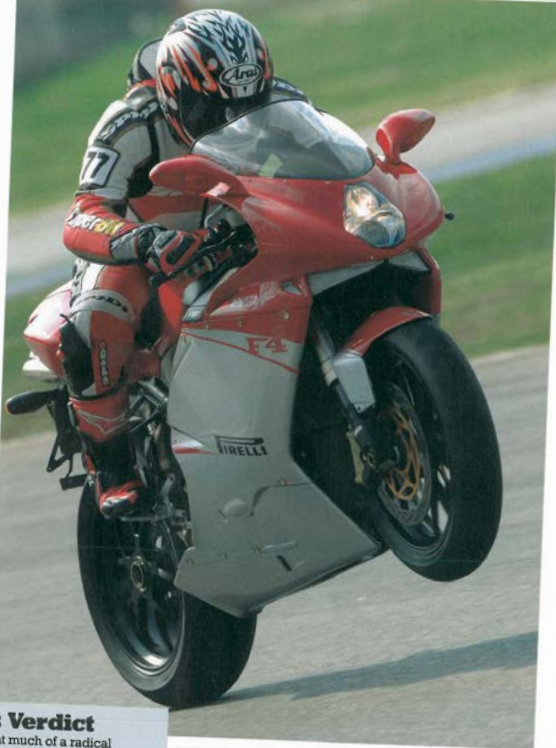
LAUNCH TEST MV AGUSTA F4 R312

the braking point after the bridge. Now those brakes are flung on in iron-gripped anger, rather than hesitantly brushed with nervous fingers, and the Marzocchi front fork absorbs the violence of a rapid 250-down-to-40kph deceleration with zero fuss. There's going to be a lot of this.

Like most track-focused bikes, the harder I push the Agusta the easier it is to ride. The engine is still delivering the goods, with stacks of top-end power, and no more than a hint of lag from the slightly heavy throttle spoiling things. There's no time or opportunity to alter any suspension settings, so I'm not too bothered by the slight bobbing of the front as I moderate my line through Parabolica with slightly imprecise throttle openings. If you're prepared to spend £15k on this beauty, you should be prepared to spend some time getting the suspension set up just right for you. And you may want to spend a bit more time sorting the slightly heavy steering – handling the F4 through the chicanes is still taking more effort than I'd like.

Perfect sense

Those brakes are simply astounding though, with an impeccable mix of initial bite and progressive, inexorable power. The riding position that feels awkward and top-heavy at low speeds is



Al's Verdict

Not that much of a radical change from the base 1000R

The engine's been made faster and more flexible, and is better as a result. The chassis is the same high-class confection of stiffness and suppleness that's made it good on track since it first appeared, and it still looks pretty. On the other hand, that engine design is getting dated now, and there's a weight penalty – 192kg dry, even with those

light wheels, is hardly for a litre bike. Also, of the three bikes I rode, one was discernibly worse than the others, with a rougher motor and a variety of spare neutrals in the gearbox. But on a great track like Monza, when the sun comes out and you've got the hammer down, this particular Italian episode of the Fast Show is pretty hard to beat.

commanding and positive at full chat. Gently dragging my knee round the evocative increasing-radius geometry of Parabolica for the last dry lap, the Agusta makes beautiful, glorious, unimpeachable sense in a way that seemed utterly impossible only two hours previously. Holding my breath and tucking in as tight as my aging frame allows saw me just touching an indicated 280kph on the long

start-finish straight before the compressed drama of scrubbing off 250 of those kph. Today is not a good day to be a Brembo monoblock brake pad.

The chequered flag flaps on the edge of my speed-blurred vision, and we're in, shortly before the rain comes back and renders the rest of the day's riding moot. The day's gone fast – like everything else to do with this bike... **4/5**

tyre pressures and a bit of a tail wind, maybe. The Agusta is a very sleek, sharp beastie that cuts through the air well, but it hasn't the fairing real estate of a Hayabusa or a ZZR1400 for a normal rider to hide behind. More tellingly the latest version of the F4 RR makes a claimed 201bhp, but only claims a 297.5kph top speed.

We remain firm MV Agusta fans though. It's still got problems in the real world – the firm's had a variety of owners since 2007, and been through the same tough times we all have. But MV's range of bikes has also become a lot more practical, with the 675 and 800 triples in particular expanding its appeal out and down. Has it still got the supermodel appeal then? Well, yes. Agusta's not quite at the 'girl next door level' just yet – which is probably just as well... **5/5**

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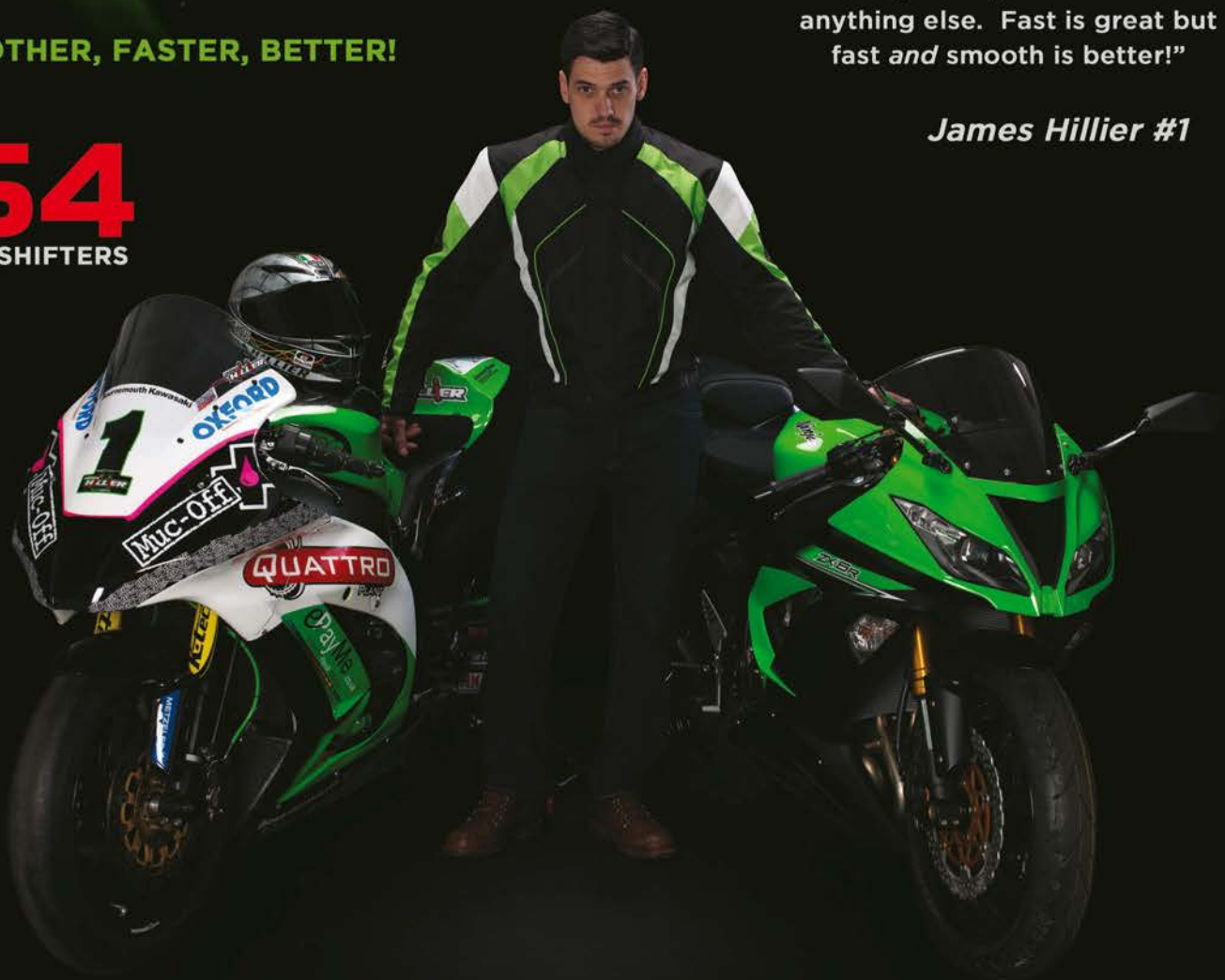
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Words: Chris Northover Pics: Phil Steinhardt

EIGHTH-LITRE WONDERS OF THE WORLD

New license laws might seem tough these days, but when learner legal 125s are as cool as these, things ain't so bad

**W**

hat was your first proper road bike? I came through the system in the era of the 33bhp restrictor kit, so stepped from a Gilera DNA 50 moped straight onto a Honda CB600F Hornet. And then shortly after, stepped into a big, immovable tree. At about 60mph. I remember that tree all too well, learning an important lesson about how irreversible mistakes are when you've got a 200kg 600, rather than a 100kg 125 beneath you. And if you're an excited seventeen-year-old, you're going to make mistakes sooner or later; that's how you learn. After the tree incident, I was confined to a four-stroke 125 for a year for my own good. A Hyosung RX125 in fact;

sexy it was not, but it taught me how to extract the most fun possible from a 15bhp motor. In hindsight, either of these two bikes here would have been perfect for the job and a better bet than blowing all my cash on a Hornet tree sculpture. So in support of keeping new riders in the cool gang and out of the trees, we took the two newest additions to the sports 125 line-up to a kart track and put 'em through their paces. Yamaha's YZF-R125 takes on KTM's RC125 and we threw the last of the two-strokes into the mix for good measure – an Aprilia RS125 superteen race bike. A tenth of the horsepower of a big bike can mean ten times the fun. Especially when a tamed supersport racer shows up.

"We drafted in son of Mac, Brother of Mac, British Supersport racer, Didn't you used to race in 125GP' Taylor Mackenzie"



Every time I organize a race bike to come along to a test, we follow the same format. Bike turns up, John polishes bike, John talks to owner for an hour, John warms engine, Chris rides bike, bike either breaks or gets black flagged due to noise and John doesn't get a go. Or, the bike runs perfect all day but John isn't there as he's been dragged into grown-up magazine shit at the last minute. So rather than face the disappointment, the boss man told me to stick my stupid 125s test, he wasn't going to be tricked into another day of warming up a two-stroke for me. So instead, I drafted in Son of Mac, Brother of Mac, Tyco Suzuki British Supersport racer extraordinaire 'didn't you used to race in 125GP' Taylor Mackenzie. What? No round of applause? The boy put a Suzuki GSX-R600 on a British Supersport podium in 2014 for god's sake; give him some credit.

With T-Mac in tow, we rolled up to a slippery, damp kart track in the Midlands and sat scowling at the Tarmac in an effort to dry it. When that didn't work, we passed the time by pulling the Yamaha YZF-R125 and KTM RC125 out of the van for a poke around. Both are new for this year, both are four-stroke learner-legal 125s and both are designed to look like

full-size sports bikes. And they really do. The Yamaha clearly draws from the R6 and R1 for its looks, aping the bigger bikes' squinty-eyed faces. There are no dead giveaways either, like noodle-leg front suspension or bicycle-width tyres. The forks are basic, zero-adjustment affairs, as on the KTM, and the shock is adjustable for preload only, but decent size legs and inverted forks mean they look the part.

To be honest, there's not a whole lot of bike for the suspension to control and the basic setup does a pretty good job. Both feel a little soft when you really start to fling them around on track, but the offset to that is a comfortable ride on bumpy roads. While they are going to get ridden everywhere as if it's a race, they're not likely to spend that much time on an actual track, so I'd say the suspension is in the right place. Behind the suspension, the chassis on the Yamaha feels good, there's no bendy, hinged feeling; anyone who's ridden a budget 125 knows exactly how that feels. There's a nice big beam frame, reminiscent of the old Aprilia RS125, except steel, new and black, not old, corroded and covered in exploded engine parts. The R125 looks and feels expensive and well finished; it looks like

the baby brother to the R6 should. OK the suspension is non-adjustable, there are no brand-name components and the tyres are mileage-friendly Michelins, not sticky track fodder – but let's be realistic. The appeal of a fully specced-up learner legal 125 with pimp components would never make it out of the showroom door. The four and a bit grand that these two cost is enough to make most new bikers wince, let alone a premium version with tyres that wear out after one winter month. Besides, if you feel the need you can pile on the aftermarket mods yourself.

Where the Yam draws heavily on its family name and heritage, the KTM is a punk out on its own. Spikey, edgy styling that looks like no other bike, bright colours and an in-your-face orange trellis frame mark it out. It's not a baby RC8R, it's a bike built for young new riders. Mainly it's for young new riders who wear baseball caps with massive flat peaks and jeans so skinny you can see the BMX scars on their shins. The frame looks like it came straight from the Moto3 project and the inside-out swingarm is awesome right up to the point you need to clean it. If you're playing spec-wars, there really isn't much to pick between these two – both have upside down forks and radial brakes,



both have less adjustment than a church pew. The KTM's riding position is more relaxed than the Yamaha's, with higher bars and a less wannabe-racer feel. And for anyone who has a full license, the KTM's pillion seat disguised as rear bodywork is more inviting than the Yam's foam credit card. The digital dash on the KTM is the one part that does remind us of the RC8R superbike, although this has a few more useful features, like a fuel gauge, for instance.

The third bike in our little line-up is a throwback to the 125s I grew up wanting – the easily de-restricted two-strokes of the nineties and early noughties. If it wasn't for the fact that you could bolt the powervalve back on and go from a law-compliant 14bhp to a spot-popping 30bhp, they'd be long forgotten. But the lure of having twice the power we should and a genuine (ish) 100mph sports bike has etched the 125 two-stroke into its place in history. Emission laws have killed them off, but we got hold of a 2008 Aprilia RS125 Superteen race bike to add some smokey blue fumes to the mix. The RS125 is a beautiful looking thing, with its huge beam frame, multi-spoked wheels and beefy swingarm. But it's in the detail that it stands apart from the other two; higher quality components and nice polished finishes throughout make it feel more expensive and not so built to a price.

Track attack

All three bikes look the part and do a pretty good impression of big sports bikes, right up until you fire the engines up. At least the Aprilia's two-stroke makes you think of race bikes; the Yamaha and KTM sound more



**KTM RC 125** £4,499**► Engine**

Type: 124.7cc, liquid-cooled, single, DOHC, four-stroke
Bore x Stroke (mm): 58 x 47.2
Compression Ratio: 12.6 : 1
Fuel system: Bosch EFI
Transmission: 6 speed, wet clutch, cable actuation
Final Drive: Chain

► Chassis

Frame: Steel trellis. Go-faster orange
Front Suspension: WP 43mm inverted fork, non-adjustable, 125mm travel
Rear Suspension: WP shock, direct acting, adjustable preload, 150mm travel
Brakes: (F) Single 300mm disc, Bybre four-piston radial caliper (R) Single 230mm disc, single piston floating Bybre caliper.
Tyres: MRF Revz C (F) 110/70-17 (R) 150/60-17

► Geometry

Wheelbase (A): 1340mm
Head angle (B): 23.5 degrees
Trail (E): 88mm
Seat height (C): 820mm
Weight: 142kg
Fuel capacity (D): 10 litres

► Performance

Peak power (Claimed): 15hp @ 9,500rpm
Peak torque (Claimed): 11.8Nm @ 8,000rpm

► Rider Aids

ABS

Typical Finance Cost

Deposit: £99
Duration: 24 months
Monthly: £183.33
Final Payment: £n/a
APR: 0.0%

like my lawnmower. I jump on the Yam for a spin first and immediately the riding position makes me want to race my own shadow. KTM has opted for a more comfortable, higher bars approach, but the Yam feels like it looks – racey. Out on the circuit, once the track dried up, the Yamaha was great fun to stick lap after lap on. You've got to work the gears hard on both of these bikes, constantly tapping up and down to keep them singing. But on that little kart track, chasing Taylor round in circles, the fun levels were as high as any track test. The stiff chassis meant you could be precise with your lines, nipping at the edges of the track through the chicane and kissing kerbs on the way out of turns. Get too aggressive, though, and both bikes would flick back at you in protest. If anything, the Yam was slightly more planted, but that was countered by the KTM's ability to get going fractionally quicker.

But we really are splitting hairs here. Obviously the most important feedback from the track test was how easy it was to get your knee down. The answer? Very. The riding position on the R-125 did make it a little more natural, but you could happily de-virginise your sliders on either bike. Just don't get over excited at the first scrape and forget how slippery a wet road can be...

Once we'd pulled every dodgy overtake we could and run each other onto the grass one too many times, we switched our attention to stunts. Stunts are a crucial part of the repertoire of any first bike, particularly if you're seventeen and still a firm believer in the lady-seducing abilities of a well-executed





wheelie. The first hurdle at this point was the KTM's ABS system – a worthy ally when trying to out brake the YZF on a wet track, but a stick-in-the-stunting-mud when it comes to skids and stoppies. There is solace in the form of a hidden button on the bottom left hand corner of the dash to switch the ABS off. It will turn itself back on the minute you kill the engine however, so you need to keep a beady eye on the light. There wasn't much to choose between the two bikes when it came to stoppies and skids; both will happily roll a big one up onto the front tyre. And, with a bit of moisture on the ground, you can skid both into a nice powerslide – crucial for turning around in tight spaces, m'lud. Getting either bike up onto the back wheel needs a fair bit of commitment. Roll along with the clutch out in first gear, at about 8mph; pull the clutch in, wind loads of gas on and then, as you drop the clutch, yank on the bars for all you're worth. If you're stood up, you can get your weight back a bit further which helps to pull the front up. The KTM's higher bars definitely help here, but both bikes will come up to the balance point provided you've got your technique dialed in. The trick is to get up high straight away, then use tiny changes in throttle to keep the wheelie



going. There's not enough power to let you work up to the balance point, so you've got to be pretty accurate with your initial pull 'n' pop. Luckily, if things go a bit wonky, neither bike weighs much, so you can usually catch a wobbly landing before you end up on your side. Despite all the abuse, we were dishing out, neither bike missed a beat during the 'stunting and riding like idiots' phase of this test. The KTM's ABS did annoy us when it switched back on after a stall and the Yamaha would occasionally take a few seconds to start, but there were zero mechanical complaints.

The final part in our shootout between the leaner legal bikes was the performance test; when you haven't got much, every little counts. In theory, both bikes are restricted to exactly the same power, but already from our time on the track we could feel differences. The Yamaha felt smoother, but the KTM definitely had a little more zip off of a turn, so it was off to the runway to find out what was going on.

PERFORMANCE

	YAMAHA	KTM
0 – 30mph	3.7s	3.9s
0 – 60mph	15.9s	15.8s
0 – 70mph	36.5s	31.3s
Top Speed	77.0mph	77.3mph

Surprisingly, the KTM hits 70mph a full five seconds before the Yam, but it's clear that neither bike is going to lose you your license unless you're really trying. That 0.3mph top speed difference could easily be lost if the KTM rider wore an extra jumper. We did some experimenting with aerodynamics and an extra mph can be eked out if you push your bum right back on the pillion seat, allowing you to get lower and flatter to the tank. Sitting up will cost you five miles per hour – you have been warned!

The oil burner

We've ignored the Aprilia up to now and with good reason; the RS125 is no longer available new and, even when it was, in de-restricted form they were illegal to ride on an A1 license. Not that that stopped any of us. The bike we have here is a race bike that

Yamaha YZF-R125 £4,421

► Engine

Type: 124.7cc, liquid-cooled, single, DOHC, 4-valve

Bore x Stroke (mm): 52.0 x 58.6

Compression Ratio: 11.2 : 1

Fuel system: Fuel injection

Transmission: 6 speed, wet clutch, cable actuation

Final Drive: chain

► Chassis

Frame: Steel deltabox

Front Suspension: 41mm inverted fork, 130mm travel

Rear Suspension: Linkage-type monoshock, adjustable preload, 114mm travel

Brakes: (F) 4-piston radially mounted caliper, single

292mm floating disc (R) Single piston caliper, 230mm disc

Tyres: Michelin Pilot Street (F) 100/80-17 (R) 130/70-17

► Geometry

Wheelbase: 1,355mm

Head angle: 25 degrees

Trail: 89mm

Seat height: 825mm

Weight (claimed, full fuel load, ready to ride): 140kg

Fuel capacity: 11.5 litres

► Performance

Peak power (Claimed): 15bhp @ 9,000rpm

Peak torque (Claimed): 12.4Nm @ 8,000rpm

► Rider Aids

NONE

Typical Finance Cost

Deposit: £400

Duration: 36 months

Monthly: £127.04

Final Payment: n/a

APR: 8.9%






competes in the Aprilia Superteen series at Thundersport GB. If you've not heard of the Superteens, it's the same series that riders such as Casey Stoner, Cal Crutchlow, Sam and Alex Lowes and Leon Haslam learnt their speedy craft in. This RS125 is usually ridden by a young lad called Conor Thompson; fresh from minimoto and looking handy on a full-sized bike already. Judging by the leathers and side panels, he's clearly not afraid to crash either, good lad! We managed to prise him out of the seat for long enough to get a spin on his race bike. After the 11kW restricted models, this thing feels like a rocket, squeezing out almost double the power. You have to work just as hard with the gearbox though, it is a two-stroke after all. In a straight line, the YZF and RC don't stand a chance – the Aprilia hits 60mph in 8.7 seconds and stretches out to 100mph (well 99.6mph to be precise) even going into a headwind. In the turns, the Aprilia's suspension is stiffer and far more composed, begging you to act out Jack Miller corner entries at every turn. But that performance does come at a cost – you have to watch the coolant temperature gauge like a hawk on a cold day (let it drop too low and it'll seize), it has to be warmed up fully before you ride and drinks expensive two-stroke oil like a thirsty puppy. Where I was flat out for a mile straight on the four-strokes, I was nervously rolling the throttle on the Aprilia. The prospect of exploding Conor's race bike wasn't all that appealing to me, so I handed it back after a few laps and breathed a sigh of relief. Followed by a long intake of lovely, rich two-stroke; get in my lungs you beautiful noxious fumes. Pretty, fast and high-maintenance

– the RS125 is the first-bike equivalent of an early nineties Ducati; you'll love it, but you know you'll be putting in some time in the workshop.

Conclusion

Obviously the Aprilia could easily win this test – the performance advantage is more than enough to counteract the high maintenance. But that's forgetting the minor legal issue of it having too much power. Put the Aprilia in restricted form and you're back to it being a gorgeous, but finicky and unreliable version of the other two. So sorry, but the Italian two-stroke is disqualified for a breach of technical regulations. No surprises there. Out of the Yamaha and the KTM, it's hard to pick a clear winner – the KTM's slight straight-line advantage on the data logger doesn't really amount to that much on the road. I prefer the styling of the KTM, Taylor and Phil loved the Yamaha and we all agreed that the Yam did have the edge in terms of quality and feel. But at the end of a long day wheeling, skidding and racing each other absolutely everywhere, it was the Yamaha that just about sneaked the win for us. The more-focused riding position, mini-R6 styling and smoother motor gave it the edge. But if you presented a 17 year-old Chris with either of these bikes, you wouldn't hear a murmur of complaint. You'd get a thanks, a farewell and that'd be me gone until I'd run out of fuel money. The license laws may be tough, but having to stick it out on one of these is hardly a chore. Plus with a bit of dedication you'll be circle wheeling before you bin your 'L' plates. 

BRIDGESTONE RS10 TRACK TYRE

They might be quitting MotoGP, but the Japanese tyre giant is keen on using every last bit of development from the blue riband class. So it's launching the new RS10 tyre, a full-beans road-legal race tyre that replaces the BT003RS. The Racing Street 10 uses an all-new compound based on its racing slicks, together with an updated profile aimed at increasing the contact patch in corners. The carcass also deals with braking and acceleration forces better. The rear tyre is even 650 grammes lighter than the BT003RS, result! The RS10 will be in the shops in the new year.

www.bridgestone.co.uk



INTERMOT SPECIAL

The European show season got off to a cracking start last month, with the enormous Cologne show. Of course it was jammed with hot bikes – Kawasaki's supercharged H2R stealing the show easily, and Ducati's Scrambler and BMW's updated S1000RR also impressing. There was a smorgasbord of fab new kit on show too though: here's our pick of the best new products for 2015.

ÖHLINS

Something for everyone on the Öhlins stand at Intermot: you could pick from a flash monoshock and fork kit for your Honda MSX125 Grom at £400, a set of subtle black-sprung twin shocks for your Harley Sportster at £500, or a full-beans electromechanical upgrade for your Ducati at nearly £4k.

First up is the new Performance Scooter range. Aimed at selected models from 125cc up to 600, Öhlins is aiming to extend its appeal out to the well-heeled commuter as well as the Grom/MSX125 tuners. Cute show-off monoshocks, proper fork internal kits, or working-class replacement twin shocks: there's a wide range on offer.

Sure, Öhlins is the brand for the megabucks MotoGP and WSB teams. But can you run a company on such a tight market? Maybe not – so the Swedish guys are looking to cash in on the trend for customised Harleys and naked retro machines, with a choice of sweet twin-shock fitments and USD forks. The plan is to provide the same quality, style and performance we're all used to in the supersport arena, but for the hipsters and style gurus on XJR1300s, H-D Road Kings and the like.

Öhlins could be excused for being a bit peeved at Ducati – it helped the Italian firm establish the next generation of mechatronic suspension systems, and now Ducati is offering Sachs units instead on its Multistrada 1200S.

Öhlins is offering its own upgrades though, including the option of a replacement ECU for the smart suspension on earlier Multistradas that gives better performance and wider damping adjustment. If you have a bike with stock suspension, you can also buy an entire electronic suspension system for about £3,500, which includes forks, shock, wiring, ECU and dash.

More info: www.ohlins.com



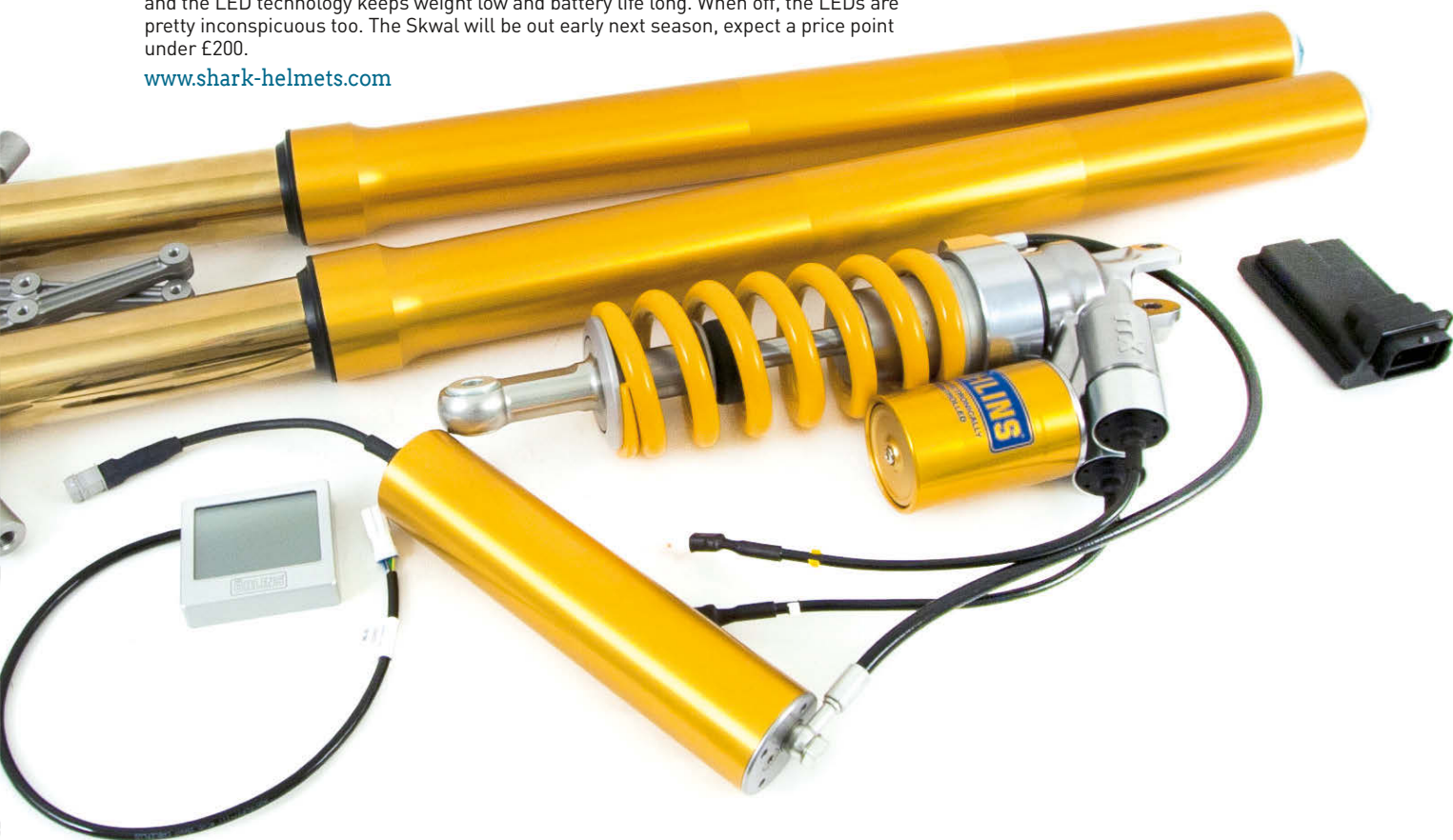


SHARK HELMETS

French helmet specialists Shark had two standout new products on display at the Cologne Internot show. First up was a rebooted Carl Fogarty replica helmet, celebrating King Carl Fogarty's four WSB victories, on the 20th anniversary of his first title in 1994. The Foggy rep is based on the firm's top-spec Speed R sporty road helmet, updated for 2015 with a new lighter shell. Expect an RRP around £300 on the Foggy 20th anniversary lid.

Also on show was a world first from Shark – a helmet with built-in LED lighting. The Skwal may have a ropery name, but it's a clever design, that looks to expand on the trend for high-viz kit amongst commuters and safety-conscious riders. A discreet button activates three LEDs in the crown, chin and rear of the lid, and another push of the button switches them into a flashing mode. The green lights are obvious but not dazzling, and the LED technology keeps weight low and battery life long. When off, the LEDs are pretty inconspicuous too. The Skwal will be out early next season, expect a price point under £200.

www.shark-helmets.com





TCX BOOTS

MICHELIN MAN GETS THE BOOT

Italian boot firm TCX announces tie-up with Michelin for grippier sole technology

Who knows more about grip and wear on rubber parts than a tyre firm? That's clearly the thinking behind TCX's new boot range, which boasts a new sole design by Michelin. The French tyre giant has developed all-new tread patterns and grip materials, aimed at feet rather than wheels, for both on- and off-road use. The off-road sole has a pattern based on Michelin's Anakee dirt tyre, and is fitted to TCX's legendary Infinity Gore-Tex adventure boot. Meanwhile, the road-style grip is based on Michelin's Pilot Road 3 tyre, and graces the TCX X-Cube Evo boot. TCX has revamped its adventure, touring and urban boot range for 2015, focussing on the growth there rather than in the supersport world. Expect new track-biased products for next year though.

www.tcxboots.com





ALPINESTARS MOTEGI SUIT

Like many of the Italian firms, Alpinestars was keeping a low profile at Intermot, perhaps holding fire until the Milan show next month. Home advantage and all that. But we did come across a few 2015 goodies from them, including the updated Motegi race suit. The Motegi is a mid-priced suit from Astars, so it doesn't have the megabucks airbag setup of the top-range suits. But it comes with the usual Alpinestars refinements: moulded dual-density exterior sliders on impact points, with CE-approved inner protectors, removable mesh liner, stretch and vent panels and comfy neoprene collar. Price tbc, but expect to pay around £600.

ALPINESTARS GP-PRO GLOVES

Matching the Motegi suit for style and protection comes the new GP-Pro glove. Protection comes in the form of PU injected outer protectors, a kangaroo leather palm, and a pinkie finger bridge. External seams and pre-curved fingers add comfort to the protection. A premium glove, so expect a price around £170.

www.alpinestars.com



ARAI CHASER-V PRO/ QUANTUM-ST PRO

ARAI UPS COMFORT WITH UPDATED STREET AND TOURING LIDS

Japanese lid firm Arai is more about evolution than revolution, so the mods to its range for 2015 are subtle. The base Chaser and midrange Quantum designs are the ones getting tweaked for next year, both now featuring Arai's PSS Pro-Shade System flip-down sunvisor as standard. The Quantum ST-Pro also has a new 'long-oval' head shape fitment, which is aimed at improving fit for most European heads, and giving more space in front of the chin. There's a new interior material, and revised breath mask and chin curtain design for less noise.

The Chaser-V Pro also gets a chin curtain and the new Eco-Pure liner with anti-bacterial and anti-fouling properties. It also gets optional speaker pockets in the cheek pads, for easier tunes/phone/intercom on the move.

The Chaser-V Pro will cost from around £400, the Quantum from about £460, depending on colour scheme.

More info: www.whyarai.co.uk





↑
LEATT

NEW HELMET FROM NECK PROTECTOR FIRM

We know and love Leatt for its awesome neck protectors, as well as its offroad body armour. But the South African firm is extending its protection upwards, with a new helmet design. The GPX Six-Five offroad lid is packed with innovation, from the 'Armourgel' air vents, which absorb impact energy and improve cooling at the same time, to the dual-density foam inner shell, that gives increased protection while reducing the shell thickness. Even the peak screws are smart: they have a hollow hexagonal centre, so if the head snaps off, they're easily removed with an allen bit. And the end of each screw has an allen bit built in!

The GPX will be around £400 for the composite shell, £500 for carbon. It's aimed at off-road use, but is fully DOT and ECE approved. Leatt promises it's working on more road-biased designs for the near future too.

www.leatt.com



ALPHA TECHNIK

Alpha Technik was the German outfit that began the development of BMW's S1000RR as a superbike racer – so it's got a few saucy tricks up its sleeve. And Cologne was home territory, so the firm had a huge stand, laden with all sorts of goodies. Highlight was a semi-transparent model of the S1000RR, with selected hot parts bolted into a perspex framework for our delectation. Polished, balanced crank, H-section rods and forged pistons, cams, STM clutch, race kit radiator – it was all in there. There seemed to be options for all budgets – so long as they're big ones.

Get your trackday dream machine built now:

www.alphatechnik.de





↑ REV'IT

Dutch kit firm Rev'It was showing off its race suits as worn by Alvaro Bautista, presumably on the basis that anything which can deal with his level of crashing has to be pretty good...

Away from MotoGP, the emphasis was on its expanded urban range – top-notch riding gear that you can wear off the bike without feeling like a social leper. Like the Flatbush jacket: soft vintage cowhide, retro design, but with the latest CE-approved armour and reinforced safety stitching. Not a bank breaker either, at around £350.

And the perfect match for the Flatbush? Rev'It's Memphis H2O jeans, which have both a waterproofing layer, and a super-tough aramid/denim construction, that the firm claims can match leather for abrasion resistance, without the bulk of some Kevlar jeans. Solid comfort, protection and style, for around £200.

www.revit.eu



METZELER SPORTEC KLASSIK

← One for fans of older bikes, Metzeler unveiled a new road tyre in a range of old-school sizes. The Sportec Klassik aims to cash in on the new-found popularity of the bikes we all loved as kids: the GPz, GS and CB ranges of the 1970s and 80s. The tread pattern harks back to the legendary Comp K ME1 and ME77 rubber back in the old days, which had a slightly better chance of keeping you upright than the regular hoops of the time. Of course, Metzeler's updated the compounds and carcass construction with all manner of 21st century witchcraft, so your dodgy old 1970s suspension will now totally shit itself with the levels of grip available. We imagine.

www.metzeler.co.uk

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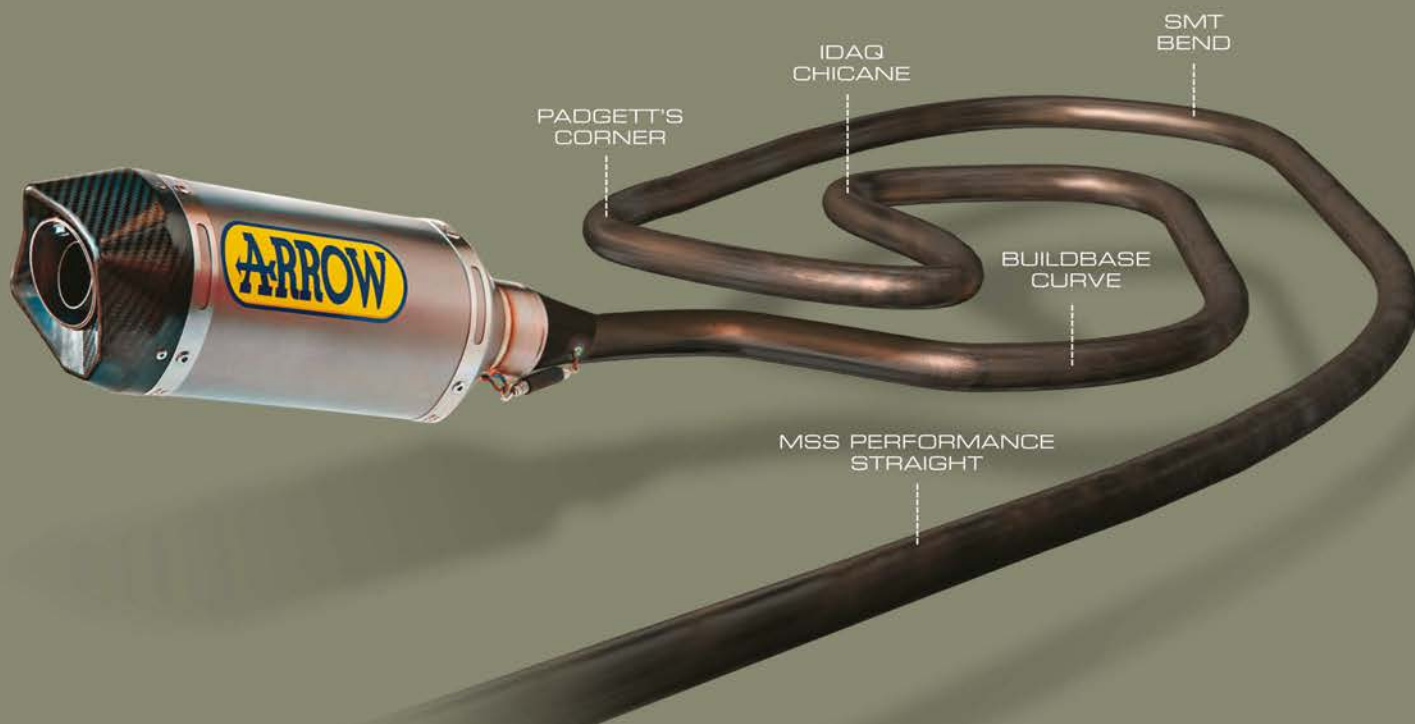
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EDITOR'S CHOICE

As 2014 prepares to switch off the lights and bugger off, John takes a look back at the kit that has made the grade, some of it refuses to die.

Words: John Hogan **Images:** SB Archive





AGV PISTA PROJECT 46 £799.99

I didn't like AGV helmets. I didn't like the feel of the lining or the shape of the chin bar. I didn't like the cheap feel of the visor mechanism or the paint schemes they came in. I didn't like AGVs because they didn't say Shoei on the side. Turns out I'm a bit of a helmet snob. Then I got my hands on the Pista. Yes, it is an incredibly expensive helmet when you look at the price alone. But when you stick your head in one and try it out, you realize what you're paying for. It is an absolute work of genius. The visor aperture is perfect. The lining luxurious and quick-change screen mechanism is as easy to use as a light switch. I did a thousand miles in mine before I passed judgement. With another four thousand miles added to the tally, I can hand on heart say that this is the best helmet I've ever worn. I'd still go for a Shoei X-Spirit 2 if I really had to choose, but only because it's cheaper. This is the helmet of choice if money is no object, every single time.

www.agv.co.uk/race



MICHELIN PILOT ROAD 3 £150 A PAIR IF YOU'RE QUICK

I'm as guilty as anyone else when it comes to getting sucked into the hype of a new tyre. In my opinion, without the quality road rubber we have today, there'd be little need for traction control and vice versa. Put simply, tyre technology is an area where we've seen more improvements than any other in the last decade. That said, progress sometimes takes a sideways step rather than a forward one. I think the superseded Michelin Pilot Road 3 is a better tyre than the new model four. It feels better when it's cold, it seems to work with any bike that has a fitment that fits and most importantly, when I spent some time riding the PR4 on the launch, I couldn't feel any tangible benefit, other than the fact they were telling me it was new and improved. I can remember sticking a set of PR3s on my long-term ZX-10R in 2011 and being pretty shocked at how good they felt in the dry. When it rained I was an instant convert to sipes and all of the other witchcraft going on inside these things. They instil confidence and then reward that faith with superb road manners and laughable levels of grip in the rain. If you can still find a set of PR3s, snap them up and stick them in your garage. When they're gone, they're gone. Unfortunately.

Moto.michelin.co.uk





WOLF 1100 TEXTILE GLOVES £69.99 WHEN NEW

The last time I wrote about these gloves, I confessed that I'd pinched them from Niall Mackenzie when we worked at TWO magazine years ago. I had nice things to say about them and I'm surprised to say I've yet to find a pair of new gloves that has convinced me to retire these. They're perfect for all day riding, giving that 'just right' level of feel and comfort. They're also ideal as a little treat if you're riding home after a track day. The visor wipe on the thumb still gives a full wipe, even after seven years of work and the Velcro fastening still sticks with the same conviction they did the day Niall started looking for them. Having recently had to endure a 60-odd mile midnight run with no gloves on, these old Wolf gloves have even more appeal than they used to. When I find a better pair of winter gloves, I'll let you know, just don't be surprised if you're still reading about these gloves in a couple of years' time.

www.ebay.co.uk





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MARC MARQUEZ

He has the beating of every rider on the planet. He has an infectious smile and an uncompromising riding style that has left the rest of the MotoGP grid scratching their heads. He also has a book out and we've been given a sneak preview...

W

e've managed to secure an exclusive extract from Marc Marquez' official biography. You might feel that at just 21 years of age there seems little point in writing a biography: how much of a story can someone so young tell? But when you consider that some riders spend a lifetime failing to achieve what the smiling Spanish elbow dragger has managed in such a short space of time, it's obvious that there's a story to be told. We've read the book from front to back and it's a belter. Marc's relationship with the family that delivered him to the premier paddock is as close as the family he's nurtured in his own garage. Gaining respect from other riders in the premier class seems to come easily when you're this good. ▶





Márquez at the 2013 Jerez MotoGP test with his manager Emilio Alzamora

The smile, the good nature, the 'can do, will do' attitude, the desire to please Grandad Ramon, Grandma Sole and Grandma Alvira, his dad Julià, his mum Roser, his brother Àlex, his manager Emilio Alzamora, his coach Santi Hernández, his Honda bosses Shuhei Nakamoto and Livio Suppo, all the people at Repsol; wanting them to be excited at the prospect of the back-to-back 125cc and Moto2 champion rewriting the record books while earning unprecedented praise for a senior class rookie – it all came together at the moment when the 2012 Moto2 season reached its conclusion at Valencia's Cheste circuit. It was a matter of getting off the Moto2 bike and on to the MotoGP Honda RC213V, which prompted a media scrum and led to an exclusive, historic, smouldering photo.

"Marc first climbed aboard the Honda on an absolute dog of a day. It was horrible: the track was all wet, it was dangerous, unpredictable. And by the third lap, he'd already broken the track record for the first section," recalls Suppo. "The least I could do was take a photo of the monitor with my mobile phone, and get a record of the epic feat. It was a historic day for all of us, but especially for Marc. The potential many of us had seen in Marc had been fulfilled in a matter of minutes. For Marc has a gift. He's not only quick, he's intelligent with it. And he can handle pressure too, because that was a tough day – it was no walk in the park! Marc deals with difficult moments very calmly, with a smile, with uncommon good sense. That smile, which is a sign of his optimism, is his greatest strength, his biggest attribute. With character and determination like that, he can overcome anything, however difficult."

That debut ride at Cheste was very special, though Marc doesn't attach much importance to it. "When you move up into a new category, your first task is to put yourself in control of the situation, work out how the bike handles, understand it, ask questions of it, watch, learn. No one put any pressure on me. I had a two-year contract and Nakamoto, the boss, told me to take it easy – that's right! – he said to take it easy, but he also immediately added that he

thought I'd make the podium in the first race in Qatar," says Marc, before bursting into fits of laughter.

Looking back, Márquez identifies a couple of moments as being crucial stages in his apprenticeship, as he graduated from Moto2 to MotoGP. While these moments may not have been decisive in themselves, for him they were signs of the progress he was making in adapting to the new category. "The first thing was figuring out where I was and how things worked in MotoGP. I'd come from categories where, when I came into the pit, I talked to my coach and told him my impressions. And that was basically it. Now, when I come into the workshop, a horde of engineers, repairmen and mechanics descend upon me, Santi [Hernández] among them, of course. And I have to talk to them all, about everything, and separately: engine, telemetry, suspension, stability, tyres... And all this – this new system of working – I learned in a private test with Álvaro Bautista, a test set up specifically for me to learn how to work in MotoGP. It was a vital lesson."

The next key moment made a strong impression on the Honda bosses, who are always very encouraging, but prudent too; afterwards, they realised exactly what sort of rider they had on their hands. The moment came in the second series of private pre-season tests in Sepang, Malaysia, when Marc fell off for a third time: three accidents in three days. "At the end of every session we have a meeting in the pit where we sum up everything we've done," Marc explains. "This time, Takeo Yokoyama, a Japanese engineer, leader of the RC213V project, told me to calm down, told me I didn't need to force things so much, that I needn't take so many risks – that he didn't like me falling off and I should be more careful. To be honest, I guess he was telling me to slow down. Yes, that was it really, he was telling me to slow down."

Those present describe the look on Marc's face as a mixture of perplexity, understanding and politeness. But what the rookie said was blunt.

"I'm sorry, Takeo," Marc recalls telling the





"If I want to win, if we want to win, there's no other way of us progressing, of us improving and getting faster"


The early tests came good in the end...

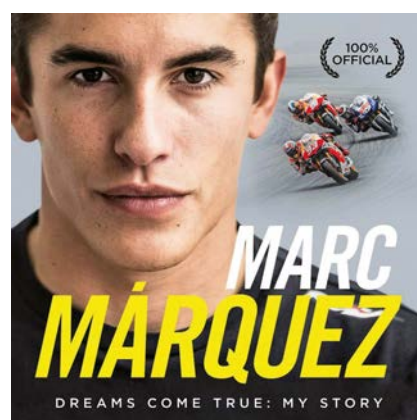


Team boss Livio Suppo

project leader. "I understand you, I follow your logic perfectly, but you need to understand that this is my style, and it will go on being my style. I don't fall off because I want to; I fall off because it's the only way I know of finding the limits."

"And if I want to win, if we want to win, there's no other way of us progressing, of us improving and getting faster. I'm not trying to fall off, Takeo; if I think I'm going to fall, I slow down. But just so you know, I'll keep on pushing it, because that's what training is for: getting to know the limits, my limits and the bike's limits."

Those present say the look of perplexity and understanding, or whatever it was, moved to Yokoyama's face. They exchanged knowing smiles, before Yokoyama added: "I understand you, but you should know we're worried about you hurting yourself. We're not worried about the bike – you can break the bike and go through hundreds of spare parts, don't worry about that – but we're worried about your safety." 



You can order your copy of his book from Ebury Publishing. It's beautifully written, has a fantastic set of images, many of them unseen until now. Priced at £19.99 it's one to add to the Christmas list. Click your way to www.eburypublishing.co.uk and get ahead of the queue.

NEVER RIDE YOUR DREAM BIKE



Words: Chris Northover Pics: Phil Steinhardt

You should never ride the bikes
you had as a poster when you
were thirteen. Weird handling
and out of date performance
will only disappoint you. Right?



That's the advice, anyway. But how many of us would really turn down the chance to ride the bike of our childhood dreams? Not me, that's for sure. So when Sarah Jordan kindly offered me the chance to ride her Ducati 748R special, I was at Brands and in my leathers quicker than you could say 'less power as standard than a five-year-old CBR600RR'.

There's a big ol' 'but' coming now, you can sense it can't you? The 'but' in this case relates to that last statement about the power being less than a CBR-six. The 'but' comes from Sarah's husband Steve, of Steve Jordan Motorcycles, who just so happens to be a dab hand at Ducati tuning. A Ducati 748R is no ordinary bike, and this one is no ordinary 748R. In fact, it isn't a 748 at all any more, with its bores stretched out to 853cc this is the middleweight sports bike Ducati never built. I'll leave it to Sarah to explain a bit about the bike and how it came about, while I nip off and have a few more Foggy fantasies...

"This was Neil Spalding's bike originally, he bought it off someone who blew it up. They had some bottom end problems, Neil fixed it but the guy couldn't afford to pay his bill, so Neil took it on and basically threw a load of stuff at it. Obviously the 853cc kit, it's got some 748RS bits in the top end and the adjustable belt rollers, RS closing springs on the rockers, and the heads have all been done and ported. And then because Neil was supported and running 748Rs in British supersport I think with Dean Thomas, he got hold of some of the factory Corse stuff. Like the shock which is a proper Corse Öhlins so it's not even got a proper part number on it, it just has someone's race number etched into it which is quite nice. The exhausts were a complete one-off, er, a 52mm tapered system that Ducati made. I think they made two and they used them for certain circuits when they were doing supersport. So maybe Snetterton where the bike needed more top end, they built an exhaust just for that so it's got a full titanium tapered system which I've been offered 1600 quid for by a collector. These are the only ones of these I've seen and they've got the really long end cans which is handy at noise testing because it only makes 100dB so you don't have to worry about that anywhere. But other than that just all the usual bits. The Öhlins forks have got K-Tech internals in them, as you do to Öhlins forks haha. K-Tech actually do an upgrade kit for the Öhlins road and track forks that come stock on the Ducatis. Because stock for the road bike are valved for the road, so when you try and race hard on them they're a little lacking. So K-Tech do the re-valve kit which works really well and is cheaper than the Öhlins re-valve, so hence why we went that way. Other than that, er, yeah that's it really.

"The guy who had it before me bought it off Neil but he only did about two track days on it and it sat stored for three or four years. And I only knew about it because he brought it here to our shop to be set up on the dyno a couple of years before I bought it. And when I was looking for one I thought oh I wonder if he's

selling it, contacted him and he was.

"So that's how I managed to get hold of it; I think he regrets selling it now though! I've got 127.77bhp at 10,600rpm and it makes 90.65Nm of torque. It weighed in at Snetterton at about 180kgs. That's the only thing, it is heavier than the SP I had, that was really light for the class, it was 170kgs but I did have carbon wheels on that and I think that made quite a lot of difference. This has got the stock wheels in it, it's not bad, it turns well enough. A lot of people say oh they don't steer very well and that, but it steers fine.

"I've had a best result of fourth on it and I finished sixth in the championship this year. Last year I only managed four meetings because we developed a problem with the ECU and it took us four meetings to find that. It would be fine all day Friday practice, then start cutting out on Saturday in the race. Anything you could change, we changed. We changed crank sensors, plugs, tilt sensor; everything. Eventually we were testing it on the dyno with the seat unit off and as Steve [Sarah's Ducati tuning hubby] got off he knocked the ECU with his leg and the bike cut out. We started the bike up again, tapped the ECU and it cut out – it had a dry joint on the circuit board that had been cutting the bike under certain heat or vibrations. We got another ECU and that fixed it, so we got my ECU repaired, but it was a pain in the arse. It's been good as gold other than that; it's been good all this season, hasn't dropped off any horsepower. Steve's compression tested it and it hasn't changed, we checked valve clearances midway through the year, they're spot on, we checked the rockers for wear, that's all good. So literally we've just done oil and filters, plugs, a valve service halfway through the year, it's done the season on a set of belts fine – actually we've done very little [for a race bike]. If you tried to get 27 extra horsepower out of an R6, you certainly wouldn't be doing a whole season with just a valve service... This engine was built a good 6/7 years ago and it's strong. Electrical wise, you can have problems with it, like we've had with the ECU, but if the whole bike is clean and you just use good oil, keep an eye on the clearances and the compression, make sure it's not losing anything, they're strong. Because they've got titanium rods in them as standard [the R versions], you're not going to have a problem with those, they're not going to snap very easily. Er, touch wood because I might have cursed it for this weekend! It's been a nice bike to own and race really. It's going to get stripped down now, fully cleaned and restored back to mint condition and then maybe the odd track day. I might do the odd race meeting on it next year, I don't know. I really don't want to keep hammering it; I want to keep it nice. I might do the odd Ducati owners club trackday, go and drink tea and look at the bikes, talk shit generally all day. It might go in the living room if Steve eventually agrees to it. Like anything, it's always for sale if someone offers me the right money for it, but I have grown quite attached to it. It might just be a keeper for quite a while.





out, as my session was called, Sarah had lovingly warmed up the 853R's motor for me and it was time to live out all those boyhood fantasies. Resisting the urge for a celebratory wheelie, I slip out into the session, use the clutch to get past neutral to second and then quick-shift my way through the gears down Paddock Hill bend. I brake early, for Druids, anticipating wooden 20-year old brake power and end up having to re-accelerate. I'm underestimating the bike at every point, braking early, when there's actually plenty of power, turning in hard and wrestling a bike that doesn't need to be wrestled, and then there's the power. Wall-to-wall drive from low in the rev range that keeps pulling hard right round the old-school analogue tacho, means I'm soon hurtling into every turn. Proper brakes and a slick slipper clutch get

"A couple of power wheelies out of Druids and I'm Carl Fogarty."

"I think if you rode a standard 748 now you'd be disappointed. It's not too gnarly a job to do the 853 conversion because they all share the same bottom end so you just get the barrels bored out, get the bigger pistons and job done. You could even put a 916 crank in a 748 engine and do nothing else but fit a thicker base gasket and you get an 803cc giving 10bhp extra straight off. They're really interchangeable like that. You can put a 916 top end on the 748 too that brings it out in the 853 range. So there are loads of different ways of doing it. But the trick to get the real power out of any of the cc gains (which get you more torque) involves gas flow work to the heads and dialing the cams in properly. A normal 853 like this with honest figures would be around 115bhp, but with all the work we're up to 127bhp on this one. As Neil Spalding said, it's the bike Ducati should have built."

My turn

I've been in love with the Ducati 748s and 916s since the first time I slapped a poster of one on my bedroom wall as an excitable 11-year-old kid. The looks, the sound both had me captivated, but what really swung it was watching my hero Carl Fogarty winning World Superbike races on them week in, week out. Then Neil Hodgson, Steve Hislop and Shane Byrne in BSB. I've sat on those bikes, revved a few of them but never actually ridden one for myself. And the longer it's gone on, the more reluctant I've been. Things have moved on quite a lot in the last 20 years and the old Dukes are pretty outdated now. Sure, you get fuel injection, but no traction control, no radial brakes, no ride by wire throttle, nothing that clever at all. Plus a standard 748 makes less power than a CBR600RR does now. And I've since fallen for the Ducati 848, which is essentially the modern, powerful version of the 748. Surely riding one now could only be a disappointment? Well I was about to find

the thing stopped and the awkward steering I'm anticipating just isn't there. The first time I fire myself into a bend a touch too quick, I start to panic, convinced the Ducati isn't going to like being pitched in so hard. But it doesn't even flinch. If anything it steers quicker than the 848 that replaced it, although not so fast as the latest version, the 899 Panigale. With the wide spread of power, riding the 853R is a pleasure, letting you ride the track to its fullest without battling to find the right gear for any given turn. A couple of power wheelies on the gas coming out of Druids and in my mind I'm now definitely Carl Fogarty. By the time I get back to the pits it's got out of hand. I drop the bike with my mechanic Slick and march out of the garage with a piercing stare, looking for Italians in dressing gowns to fight with.

Now I'm left with a real dilemma. The reality turned out to be every bit as good as the dream, but the reality in this case was a particularly trick Ducati 748. I don't care, I'm in love all over again and more obsessed with finicky Italian V-Twins from the 90s than ever. Against everyone's better advice and my better judgement I've been looking for a 748 ever since I got back from that trackday. Before you can say '£1,000 service bill' I'll be drooling over one in the Northover bat cave, pretending to be a fast Northerner and wishing I could afford a set of carbon Termignoni exhausts. **SB**




THANKS:

A massive thanks to MSV for sorting us out with track time at Brands Hatch and treating us like kings again (that's not just us, all the MSV punters get properly looked after). www.msvtrackdays.com

And thanks to Steve and Sarah Jordan for letting us play with their toys for the day. Sarah, if you ever need someone to look after the 853R, just give me a shout... If you want your bike tuned, fixed, serviced or dynoed, give them a shout at www.stevejordanmotorcycles.co.uk 01372 453322.





GP WANNABE

Words: Chris Northover **Action Pics:** Racing Line Photography

Moto3 bikes are not cheap. But if you want to gain experience on proper, lightweight race bikes there is a solution – the Aprilia RRV450GP Challenge. Great bikes plus insane riders equals stupidly close racing. We jumped in for a schooling in the ways of the lightweight racer...

I'd consider myself a fairly accomplished motorcycle racer. I might not have had the drive and focus to get to the very top, but in recent years I've been able to jump into various series and fight my way onto a podium. Triumph 675s, Ducati 848s or 899s, Superstock bikes – I know my way around them. But in ten years or so of racing, I've never had the chance to race a lightweight, GP style bike. So when Ian Newton of IN Competition dared me to race in the RRV450GP Challenge, I was all over it. 54bhp in a sharp, lightweight chassis – how hard could it be?

The Bike

You've probably never heard of an Aprilia RRV450GP, I hadn't either, until I stumbled across a sweet-looking little four-stroke GP race bike at the NEC show a few years back. IN Competition, run by Ian Newton

(himself an ex-250GP racer) developed the bike as a stepping stone between the hugely successful Superteens series and Superstock 600 racing. The gap in progression from a 29bhp Aprilia RS125 to a 120bhp 600 was left when the old Aprilia RS250 challenge ended and something similar needed to appear. But what to race? With no suitable bikes available in the Aprilia range, Ian decided to make his own out of the SXV450 supermoto. If you're a supermoto fanboi like me, you'll know that the SXV was a force to be reckoned with in motard racing, with its super-compact 77-degree V-twin motor smashing all the singles on every straight. And it wasn't just the motor that was special – the aluminium/tubular steel frame (much like the one on the MV Agusta F3) and swingarm were stunning too, and a cut above the rest of the dirt bike-derived field. Seven Supermoto World titles say all you need to know about the performance of this package. Looking

at it now, it seems like it was made to be a road racer; the compact, high revving V-twin, the super-stiff frame (in dirt bike/supermoto terms), the 180-section rear tyre, all the ingredients are there. And yer man Ian baked 'em together into a pretty cost-effective race bike. The forks and front brakes are borrowed from the Aprilia RS 125 road bike, with a custom linkage pushing on the Maxton shock out back and Maxton internals in the forks. The yokes are specially designed to get the steering geometry exactly where they wanted it – the same as the Aprilia RS250 GP bikes. The fairings consist of a one-piece seat and tank cover, with an aluminium-fabricated fuel tank beneath. Rearsets are another area where the machining services of Scott and Stinson Engineering are called into play, getting the pegs rearwards where they need to be for a race bike. A custom front subframe holds the AIM dash and an Arrow underseat silencer completes the job. Wheels are forged Marchesinis, with Bridgestone RC10 control tyres and there's a slipper

clutch tucked away inside the motor.

When you look over the bike, everything feels just right and lots of little touches make sense from a racer's point of view. An underseat exhaust is much less likely to get damaged in a crash, ditto the hidden fuel tank and the tank cover is much cheaper to replace. Sure, fancy pants brakes would be nice, but that all adds to the cost and the RS125 ones do the job. The RRV tips the scales at 115kg and pushes out 54bhp at the rear tyre. After an hour getting all excited over it in the garages, I couldn't wait to get out on track.

Testing, testing

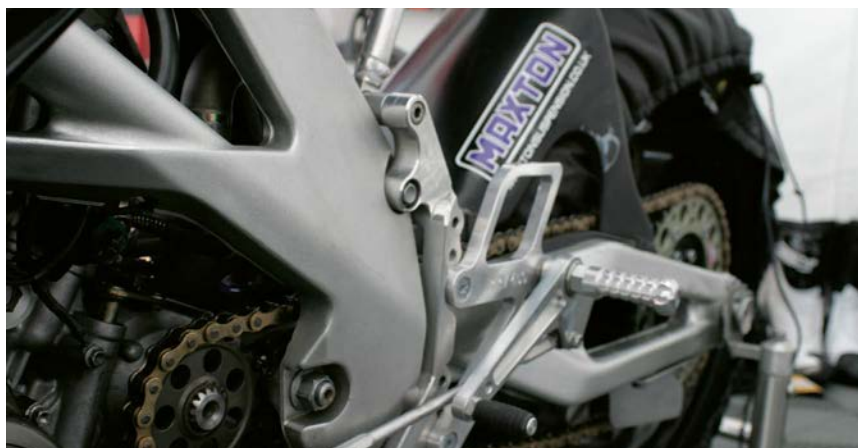
I have got a bit of a thing for lightweight bikes right now. Since racing the miniscule CBR150 in South Africa a couple of years back, I have seen the ultra-light, er, light. They're just so involving to ride and you have to work so bloody hard for each and every mph. The RRV is one of the best I've ridden yet, bettered only by the Honda NSF250 Moto3 bike. Given

"You have to work so bloody hard for each and every mph"

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Without exception, the lads in the RRV450GP challenge all deserve a mention just for heading out and riding like that every weekend, nutters, we love it. Stand out riders at Donny were Sam Wilford, George Stanley and Lewis Rollo who traded paint, lap records and race wins over the four-race weekend. And I've gotta mention Cameron Lee who did his best to make me feel at home all weekend. Mainly by duffing me up into Redgate every flippin' lap.

If you want to see some insanely close racing, get to some Thundersport rounds next year and keep an eye out for these boys. Moto3 looks gentlemanly after this...



that the Honda costs double (around €21,000 compared to £9,999) what the Aprilia is, that's no real surprise. And if you look after your RRV, it'll do a whole season's racing before needing a rebuild. Best of all that rebuild costs only slightly more including labour than a single piston costs for the NSF (£1,400 vs £1,000). None of that matters when you're riding round, of course, but knowing the RRV is within reach does make it sweeter afterwards.

For the first few laps on the RRV, I'm a bit lost in all honesty. The brakes are consistent but their power is the only chink in the armour of this bike and remembering to really squeeze the lever is distracting me. Obviously, when I stop pussy-footing around





THUNDERSPORT GB

Thundersport GB is a racing club run with the best interests of the riders and their supporters at heart. How many times have you read that about something? But at Thundersport, they've been doing it long enough to know exactly what helps and what the riders need. Things like keeping the race meetings four weeks apart to give everyone's funds and bikes time to recover. Or running meetings over bank holiday weekends to save on time off work. There's TV coverage of Sunday races to give aspiring stars a platform to showcase themselves on and encourage sponsors in with a bit of coverage. And for those who are there purely for fun, there are a bunch of super-cheap classes to get you on track without ending up in debt. Race days are run smoothly with lots of action for spectators, but decent length races, rather than a bunch of five-lap dashes. It's a refreshing approach, the guys and girls running it are super helpful and friendly and there's always a big tub of sweeties on the desk in the race office. What more could you ask for?

www.thundersportgb.com



Chris' commitment into turns was never under question, as this mullered front tyre shows



and really need to stop, that's no longer a problem and a good yank pulls it up just fine. Unlike the Kawasaki Ninja 300 and KTM RC390 we rode last month, the Aprilia has a fully sorted chassis and enough power to really get a decent pace going. The riding experience is still dominated by corner speed, though and it quickly has you rattling over the kerbs, fully tucked in with the throttle wide open. Once again, all previous ideas about braking points and which gear to run through Donington Park's sweeping turns are junked. For turn one, Redgate, I'm not braking until I'm in the end of pit lane, then flat out firing through the gears all the way down Craner. The Old Hairpin is taken in 5th gear on these things. Fifth! Every turn I come to, no sooner had I got turned in, then I'd be back on wide open throttle again. Bloody brilliant.

Wanna race?

If I thought riding these things around at a trackday was fun, that was nothing compared to racing them. The RRV450GP challenge runs at Thundersport GB meetings – a racing club designed with the riders and their supporters at the top of the priority list. The riders in the challenge have mostly graduated up from the Superteens series and have all the caution and self-preservation you'd normally expect from teenage racing stars. I have honestly never raced with riders who'll battle this hard for each and every overtake. You don't even need to have left a gap, all it takes is a hesitation to pass the guy in front and two of 'em will be wedged between your elbow and knee before you know it. After one race, my

leathers had at least two people's tyre marks on them, I'd been on the grass and lost the front more times than I normally would in a whole season. And I ended up 12th. I'd been running up with the battle for first (in the middle of a 12-bike freight train), before pulling my usual trick of sniffing a podium and getting all over-excited. Someone stuffed it up the inside of me into the old hairpin, I tried to run round the outside of them, lost the front, caught it, pinned the gas and ran wide onto the grass and dropped back to 12th. My over-riding antics saw me frazzle the front tyre in race two, not aided by a clutch lever that went awol on the second lap. But still the relentless overtaking and re-overtaking continued. In the time I took to fling a loose lever out the way, four bikes had nurfed past me, stopping only to jab an elbow at me on the way through.

So there it was, the best I managed over the weekend was an 11th, but for once I really couldn't care less about the results. I raced harder than ever before, pulled off more audacious overtakes and survived more of the same than ever and grinned so hard my Shark had to be surgically removed. If ever there was a ground for learning to stick a move on Marquez, this is it. And you don't need to be a millionaire to be competitive either. Obviously the bit about not caring was a lie, it still stings getting my ass kicked by a bunch of teenagers and even the excuse book is shrugging its shoulders at me. I'm off now to find an excuse for another go and to figure out how to go faster on small bikes. If anyone wants me, I'll be in the bathroom working on my bulimia. **BT**



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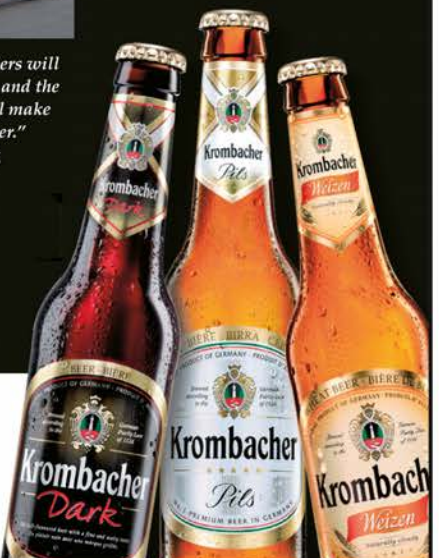


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READERS' HELP

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YOUR PROBLEMS... *SORTED!*



Blue-Point



Inertia is our enemy. It slows down our steering, our rev counter and our speedo. It slows down our bike builds too! Defeat it with cunning ploys. Make your lockup a place you want to go to: furnish it with tunes, beverage facilities, lavish draperies. Then give yourself firm targets and stick to them... Good luck!

Alan Dowds
Alan Dowds

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Kinky boots, extra lighting for winter and stripping down a cylinder head

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The PR folk are all busy organising the NEC show, so our steeds are safe for another month...

Q&A

Every month, we answer your biking problems. From riding tips to mechanical maladies, we're here to help. Email us your problems and we'll get expert advice to find the most effective solution to put a grin back on your face

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Booted into touch

About two months ago I bought some new motorbike boots. A couple of weeks ago the buckle on the right boot started to come undone whilst I was riding. I returned them to the shop but they said they were not faulty. At the weekend, the same thing happened with the left boot. The clasp looks like it has broken. Where do I stand with sending them back?

JEFF HOBBS, Birmingham

The Sale of Goods Act 1979 says that any item supplied by a retailer must be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose and must match any description. It sounds like your boots are not of satisfactory quality or fit for purpose.

We recommend that you write to the retailer, explain what has happened, include photos if you can and ask for a full refund. Don't let the retailer fob you off, even if they won't give you a refund you're entitled to a free repair or replacement within 6 months.

With Christmas coming up, here are a few consumer tips to keep in mind:

- If you're buying for someone else, ask for a gift receipt as this will save you being asked to return the goods if there is anything wrong.
- When buying online your rights are the same. You're entitled to cancel any online order from the moment the order is placed until 14 days after it is received.
- Your receipt is your proof of purchase but not having one isn't a bar to receiving a refund.
- Always check for guarantees and warranties.
- If you've been injured as a result of a faulty product, you can claim against the retailer.
- If the retailer is out of business or you didn't buy the product yourself, you can claim against the manufacturer.

For any consumer law related issues, contact the team at Zest Legal on 0845 388 3409.



FRONT END BUSINESS

FORK FIX Part One

Fixing a front fork problem can be a fair old job. But the first part is getting the front end apart. Here's how to get the forks out of your bike in about an hour.

A modern front fork is a very solid piece of suspension technology. But they can still need attention – whether a blown oil seal, chipped or corroded chrome stanchions, or simply needing an oil change. The first step is to get the forks out of the bike though – so here's how to do that in just an hour.

We're out and about this month, helping our mate Pete Hemmings with his Speed Triple special's R1 forks. Pete runs a small car garage, so he knows his way round a socket set, but we kept him right on the bike stuff. His bike's got a leaky fork seal, so we're going to sort them in two parts – getting the forks out this month, and changing the seals next month.

1 STAND UP GUY

The first job when taking the front end apart is to support the bike with the front wheel off the ground. If you have a centre stand, you're laughing – simply put the bike on the stand, and use a small jack or support under the front of the engine to

lift the front end and put the weight onto the rear of the bike. Our Triumph only has a sidestand, so we got the back end onto a paddock stand, and put a small jack under the engine to lift the front. A block of wood on top of the jack protects the engine sump, and a pair of ratchet straps secures the back of the bike down onto the work bench.





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2 LOOSEN UP

First job is to remove the front brake calipers on both sides. Four bolts does the job here, and we secure the calipers to prevent straining the hoses. On

our bike we were able to just sit both calipers up on the radiator out of the way. Next, unbolt and remove the front mudguard – it has to come off anyway, and doing it before the wheel gives more room to get the rim out.



3 WHEELY EASY

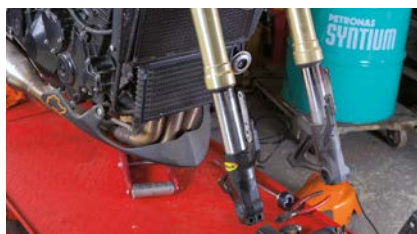
We had an R&G crash protector on the front forks, so this came off first with a 13mm spanner and socket. Next, loosen the pinch bolts, and then, using the correct Allen bit, loosen and unscrew the axle. Pete being a car man, he didn't have the correct axle removal tool, but he had a spark plug key, and the hex on top of that fitted the axle a treat when reversed. Carefully lift the wheel down and out.



4 FINE IN A PINCH

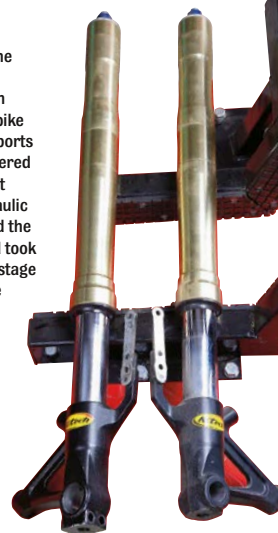
The front end is looking pretty bare now, but you might have some brake hose brackets or junctions to remove. Before you loosen anything though, make an accurate measurement of the fork position – i.e. how much fork leg is showing above the top yoke. That means when you refit them, the ride height will be the same as when you started.

Have a last check there's nothing else in the way before carefully loosening the top and bottom yoke pinch bolts. Our Triumph has three lower bolts and one at the top yoke. Watch for the fork slipping out when you loosen the last bolt, it can fall out quite quickly, damaging the fork or giving you a nasty knock on the toe. Ouch!



5 DONE!

Repeat on the other side, and that's you. Both forks out, and the bike secured on its supports (hopefully). We lowered the jack so it wasn't sitting on the hydraulic pressure, tightened the ratchet straps, and took the forks away for stage two – replacing the seals – which we'll do next month.



THANKS:

Thanks to Pete at Embassy Cars, Sutton



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ASK THE
EXPERTS

SVEN KIRSCHNING

Sven Kirschning is a product manager at BMW Motorrad, responsible for development of suits and other clothing. He's our expert on riding kit this month.

Don't flip your lid

Q Do flip-up helmets, like the BMW one, still provide crash protection when open? A copper stopped me on a rally over the summer and threatened to give me a ticket for riding with my Schuberth flip-up lid open. (In my defence it was a proper hot day and I was going really steady...).

Ken Harris

A For this question, I will ask my colleague Bernhard Neuheuser, product manager for BMW Motorrad helmets:

Flip up helmets can be homologated with the chin bar open. The sticker on the helmet then says: 0501xxxx – J/P. J stands for 'Jet'-version. As we see an increased injury possibility because of the open chin guard BMW Motorrad and Schuberth agreed together on not homologating with the J-spec.

Please see extractions of the homologation requirements:

All projections from or irregularities in the outer surface of the shell greater than 2 mm shall be tested for shear assessment according to paragraphs 7.4.1. or 7.4.2. The outer surface of the helmet shall be tested for friction assessment according to paragraphs 7.4.1. or 7.4.2.

And:

All external projections more than 2 mm above the outer surface of the shell shall have a radius of a minimum of 2 mm.

These chapters refer to injury risk due to attached parts like spoilers and so on. An open chin guard was not in mind of the people who did write the homologation requirements.

Glove changes everything

Q I've got a pair of Goretex riding gloves that are about five or six years old, and they're starting to let a little bit of moisture in on a long wet ride. Are they just wearing out? Is there anything I can do to keep them going a bit longer? They're so comfortable now, I don't want to lose them!

Steve Brown

A All the membranes like Gore are very thin, during their lifetime they face all kinds of stress, e.g. folding bending or tearing. This mechanical stress can lead to a kind of 'wearing out'.

Repairing the membrane of a pair of gloves is nearly impossible and from

a financial point of view normally not worthwhile. In order to stretch the lifetime of a membrane it is always recommended to avoid heavy folding, bending and stretching the gloves.

Crash course

Q Can textile riding kit be repaired? I've had leather suits and jackets repaired easily in the past, but I'm about to spend a load of money on a nice two-piece Cordura suit, and worry it'll be scrap after one crash!

Brian Pearson

A Generally repairs can be done. If you crash with one of our BMW suits for example, we will send it to the manufacturer in order to determine if a repair is worthwhile.

Aquatic cows?

Q Can you get proper water proof leather yet? How does it work?

Jean Rooney

A There are two types of materials on the market that are waterproof. One kind works by the use of a membrane, the other kind works with conditioned leather. The leather is made "nearly" waterproof by the use of certain chemical treating. This kind of suit can be waterproofed. The water resistance of the leather cannot be 100% guaranteed since leather is a natural material and you are never sure if the cow had some injuries during its life which could result in small holes in the leather.

Meat is murder

Q My girlfriend is a vegan, and I want to get her the best non-leather protection on the bike. How close does textile gear get to leather nowadays?

Dave Kochansky

A Textile gear can get very close to leather these days. However it depends very much on the kind of textile used and of the construction of the suit. When highly engineered fabrics are used and proper reinforcements are placed on the 'risky' zones, the textile suit can get close to leather.

In saying this, please keep in mind that there are more factors to safety than the tear resistance or the resistance to impact abrasion. The best protection also depends on ergonomic factors as breathability, comfort and even weight. I personally believe that for example an Airflow suit worn in the hot climate is better than a leather suit which might cause discomfort due to the heat stress.





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Pardon?

What can you do to help reduce noise inside your helmet? I'm planning a European tour next year, and I want to use an intercom with my mates, so want it as quiet as possible inside there.

Graham Warner

A Bernhard Neuheuser: To make a helmet quiet is a very tricky issue. The noise comes mainly from a windshield or from the front lower edge of the helmet itself. To reduce the noise level on an existing helmet is almost impossible. What you can do is to use ear plugs with a filter (like nonoise or Alpine). Any other improvement would mean you need to make big changes to the helmet which would affect the geometry or the safety.

Wash and Go(retex)?

Q Can you wash Goretex and other waterproof kit in the washing machine? I've read all sorts of internet stories about not using fabric softener, temperatures, etc etc. What's the proper recommendation for something like my BMW Streetguard suit?

Kev McDonald

A In general it is always recommended to use the supplied washing instructions which will vary from different manufacturers and even for each style, since the washing does not only depend on the materials used but also on the make up and on the trims on the garment.

Many suppliers do offer special washpowders or liquids, and for the Streetguard I would recommend the BMW washing powder.

In general, Fabric softeners should not be used on laminates (like Goretex or others).

How fast can I crash mister?

Q What sort of speeds can textile kit still protect you up to? Is it fair to say that you need to use leathers when you're going at motorway speeds, and textiles are best for round town?

Darren Miller

A It is quite difficult to answer that question. If you are riding at very high speeds on the motorway I would highly recommend the use of a leather suit. Whether a textile suit will protect you at an average speed of e.g. 100km/h depends very much on the kind of textile suit used. I would not recommend a Nylon 500 Jacket if you travel mainly with high speed on the motorway.



All in your head

Q I'm thinking about stripping and rebuilding my old Bandit 1200 engine over the winter. Right down to the cases, scary! One thing I'm worried about is rebuilding the cylinder head. It's done over 55k miles, so I want to take the valves out and grind them all back in, like my old dad used to do on his cars in the 1970s! Any tips?

Barry McLeish

A The head is one of the trickier jobs Barry, and many people panic at the thought of retiming the cams, and swapping out the valves. If you have a good valve spring compressor tool (worth renting or borrowing one – you'll only rarely use it), life will be easier. Modern valves don't need so much in the way of grinding as your dad's old Vauxhall Viva or the like did, but a bit of a clean up with some fine paste will do the job. Remember you'll need new valve stem oil seals, check the valve guides for any wear or damage, and go steady. Send us some pics of it all back up and running again next season!

Lighten up!

Q Dark nights are coming in, and the headlight on my Fazer 600 commuter isn't getting any better with age! I've fitted some premium bulbs and done the 'twin lamp' conversion that everyone does. They're still pretty lame though. Some of the pedal cyclists on the way to work have brighter lights than me nowadays, haha!

Sam Campbell

A Hey Sam, we remember our days with the original Fazer 6, the headlight was the only crap thing!

How about some auxiliary driving lights? You could bodge something up from eBay, or check out these posh Denali LED lights from R&G. Small and light(!) enough to mount on the fork bottoms, or maybe onto the frame tubes, they'll give a big boost to the lighting. Best of all, being LED, they only use 5w of power, so won't flatten your battery. They start around £180 for a twin-lamp kit, more info: www.rgracing.com.



Spray canned

Q Quick winter query: what do you guys use to stop bikes rusting in the salt and crud? I've been spraying WD40 wherever I can, but it's expensive buying a new aerosol every week!

Andy Craven

A Aerosols are the dear way to do it Andy, yep. You can get trigger spray kits off eBay, with a five-litre bulk can of WD40, or a more generic maintenance spray. Or consider Scottoiler's FS365 – a more specific protective spray that comes in various sized packages. www.scottoiler.com

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DUCATI 899 PANIGALE

■ MODS: Fuel and Settings ■ MILES: STACKS

I can see what I've done here. When I asked Chris for the Panigale last month, I forgot to take into account the fact that we were only weeks away from slimy roads and it being dark by teatime. No wonder it was so easy to get the thing off him. Ah well, nothing ventured, nothing spun up over a mini roundabout. I stuffed the Ducati into the back of the van for a planes, trains and automobiles style trip to Cologne for the Intermot show. I had to drive the van to Alan Dowds's house, leave the bike in his garage and fly to Germany. While I was gone, Chris picked up the van, leaving me with a midnight ride home a couple of days later when we got back from the show. In my haste, I threw a new pair of gloves in my kit bag, I'd briefly tried one on and decided they were snug but would fit just right once I'd done a few miles. I was very, very wrong. You have probably read about me and my struggle to find a pair of gloves for my stupidly small fingers (but connected to average sized knuckles and hands) in the past. This time the situation got very real when only a mile down the road from Al's place on my way home, I realised that I couldn't feel my fingers. It was one in the morning and I was 65 miles from home.

My options were limited. I packed the gloves into my bag and jumped back onto the bike. The temperature display



65 miles with no gloves, silly boy






Chris, pretending to be John at Mallory

on the dash showed a surprisingly mild 17 degrees. Before I knew it I was booming my way onto the M25 and cruising through the night at 70mph. The bike felt sweet, I felt like a tool for making such a basic mistake and at two am when I was sat in the front room warming my hands, I was grateful for the bike's easygoing nature almost as much as I was grateful that it wasn't raining. A couple of weeks later I rode up to Brands for the final day of BSB. I expected to see a few more Panigales, to be honest. I didn't think I'd see row upon row of them, but just five in the

main car park? Let me know if you rode yours to Brands, I'm sure I missed a load of them hiding somewhere. After the usual ten-minute faff with various security measures, it was dark before I jumped back on for the ride home. It might sound like I've been paid to say this but I genuinely haven't, I stuck the bike in Wet mode and went about my business as if the roads weren't covered in muddy car park goo and the odd damp patch. The big yellow light in the middle flashed a lot and that was about it. Simple progress was made past all of the cars waiting to get out and the little

Pani' felt more than happy to canter along, rather than carving up the traffic and trying to catch the horizon. The Ducati hospitality at BSB was as you would expect, the sideswipe from the press officer asking if we were ready to swap the Pani for something a little more suited to the conditions wasn't. He caught me off guard and dangled the keys to a Monster 1200 under my nose; how could I possibly resist? There's a moral to this month's tale and it goes like this. Only wear gloves that fit you, otherwise you could easily end up having a crash. 



TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675R

MILES: 1,450 ■ **MODS:** More fuel, topped up oil for the first time ■ **CONTACT:** www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

I really don't want to put this down, can I stay up here forever? Anyone who's done a fast wheelie or two (closed road, pro rider, my arse) has had that thought at some point. The realisation that follows the elation of topping the 100mph mark on one wheel is that, sooner or later, that front wheel is going to have to come down. Hopefully when it does, you'll get a jet fighter chirp and smoke puff from the

tyre and be on your way. Sometimes, you get a long, gut-wrenching slide before it catches up and very occasionally you get the mother of all headshakes. It all depends on the bike, the condition it's in, tyre pressures, track surface and that 40mph cross-wind you've been ignoring.

I was a pretty happy-go-lucky high-speed wheelie lover until a couple of years ago when I thought I was about to crash clean out of a career on the long term GSX-R1000

of then-editor Kenny Pryde. We were all egging each other on up at Bruntingthorpe, but each time I landed the front tyre, it felt like I had the front brake jammed on. A series of eight foot-long darkies on the runway proved I wasn't just imagining things either. Whatever it was that day, I've been a bit cautious since, until a day at Brunters this month gave me the chance to mono the Daytona to pass time in between drag racing that Superleggera. Yeah, not a



shit day at the office. Anyway, the Triumph's always been a favourite wheelie bike of ours – that Triple motor seemingly invented for stunts. Pop the clutch in second, get settled, shift to third, hold that for as long as you can, then get as high as possible, grab fourth and invariably drop back down to earth. It's definitely the most fun you can have in a straight line and all the more involving for being on a 120bhp bike rather than a 190bhp monster. With the Triumph,

you've got to work at keeping up near the balance point once you're in third or fourth, as there isn't the huge abundance of power to whip it back up there like you can on a thou. I managed to hold a 120mph wheelie for just over a mile and the best top speed I clocked on one wheel was 135mph. That made me a very happy man and put into perspective the nonsense that the boys at the Elvington wheelie speed records were pulling a couple of months ago. 199mph on

the back wheel, holding the wheelie for over 1km? I've got some serious work to do...

As well as pointless wheelie speed practice, I took the 675R for a couple of full-speed runs down the runway to get some straight line numbers down. The best 0 – 60mph I managed was 3.21seconds on the day – only seven hundredths of a second slower than the Ducati Superleggera I was also testing. Not bad for one fifth of the price. I also discovered that 100mph can be had in 6.3 seconds. Six point three. What else can you do with six point three seconds? Well, I checked – solve a Rubik's cube for one, provided you're on world record form; I'll take 100mph thanks. I also discovered that seven seconds is the amount of time in which people generate their first impressions of someone, say, presenting or speaking in a meeting. So from now on, I'm going to introduce myself with 6.3-seconds of going like ten bastards up to the ton, followed by 0.7 seconds of interpretive dance. Success and fame, here I come; so long suckers. **SB**



YAMAHA MT-09

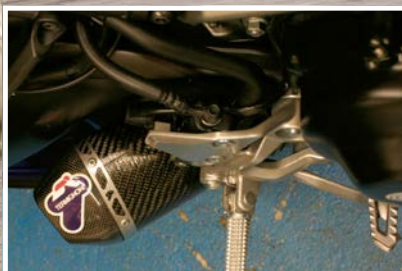
■ MODS: All the small things ■ MILES: 4,443 ■ CONTACT: www.lighttechuk.com




There are always a few little jobs you need to do on your bike and, if you're anything like me, you normally only remember them as you ride out of the garage. So when I slunk out to the garage for a quick tinker, it was no surprise that I was still merrily whirring spanners two hours later. After some slightly wayward handling last time out, with the bars kicking several times, I was ready to start fiddling with the suspension and ordering steering dampers. The first hurdle was a missing swingarm bobbin, so I slotted in a couple of shiny new ones from LightTech. The golden rule with any problem, mechanical, handling or otherwise, is to rule out the cheapest and easiest solutions first. So before I dived in to sag measurements

and chassis geometry, I stuck a tyre pressure gauge on both ends. Ah, that'd be the problem then; 25psi and 32psi in the front and rear respectively. With the correct pressures of 36 and 42psi in, guess what? It no longer handles like a three-legged camel in a sand pit. For someone who is so finicky about his tyre pressures on a racetrack, I can be a total nugget when it comes to them on the road. When was the last time you checked yours?

Tyre pressures sorted, I set about the long list of other small things that had been niggling at me. I say small things, the lack of rear indicators (they had been left off when the tail tidy was fitted) was really beginning to piss me off. Especially when fitting them took just 10 minutes – why on earth would



you leave them off in the first place? With that sorted, my next point of focus was the Termignoni exhaust; another item I suspected hadn't been fitted 100% right. When you looked down at the silencer, it was sticking out the side of the bike like it had been the subject of a Marquez close pass. Worse, when pressing on it would clip the floor on right handers, unsettling the bike and de-flowering its carbon fibre loveliness. There's normally a bit of movement available in an aftermarket exhaust system, so it was a simple case of loosening all the bolts and pushing the silencer into a more tucked-in position. With the end can tucked in neatly, I nipped all the bolts up and now have another couple of inches of ground clearance, perfect. Another quick, easy

job that I've been ducking for weeks completed. Buoyed with confidence from that, I rattled through the rest of the list – adjusting the handlebar position by rolling them forward for a more front-heavy stance, cleaning all the silly warning stickers off the tank and junking the tax disc thanks to the new rules. What I've ended up with is a cleaner-looking bike, with a slightly racier riding position, more ground clearance and handling restored to its peak. All for a couple of hours spent fiddling – do yourself a favour, find an evening and have a fiddle. Getting all those little bits tweaked has made the bike feel and look nicer for zero cash input, success! Now I've just got to remember to stay on top of it... 

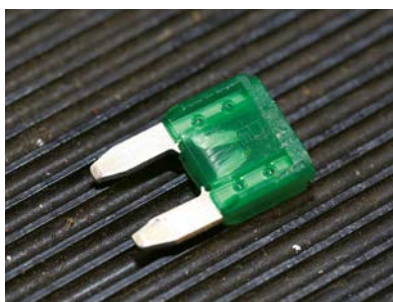
SUZUKI HAYABUSA

■ MODS: Taken it all apart and put it all back together again... ■ MILES: 3,254



Looking daft in front of a bike mechanic. We've all done it. It's no surprise really: when it's not your area of expertise, and you have to engage with the technician on their turf, you risk looking silly. Imagine me turning up at your work and trying to speak as if I knew anything about civil engineering, plastering, roads policing, cancer nursing, or any one of the thousands of other jobs out there. You'd look on me as a pitiable fool.

It's the same with faulty bikes. And of all the possible problems you can have on a car or bike, an intermittent electrical fault is the worst. It comes, it goes, you expend all your available mental energy on it, to no avail. Then you crack, and take it to a professional. Whereupon said fault disappears, like a merry prankstering poltergeist. You feel like the worst kind of fainting lightweight in front of the mechanic, and no matter how understanding everyone is, there's always that suggestion of bullshit hanging in the air. That you did something daft. That you're making it all up. That you imagined



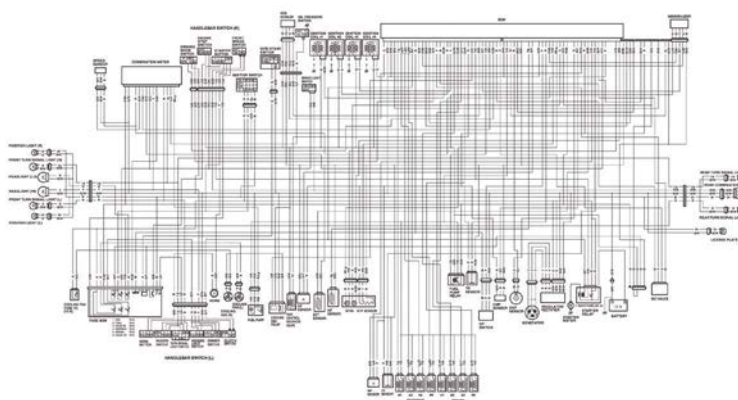
the fuses blowing. Like you're some sort of 'Münchhausen syndrome by proxy' case, seeking attention by accusing your perfectly good bike of letting you down at just the wrong moment.

That's how I've spent the last month with the Hayabusa. I got her home after the ignition fuse kept blowing last month, leaving me stranded. The fuses were blowing as soon as the ignition and kill switches were both turned on, and the little micro 10-amp chaps were exploding with proper gusto. I was convinced I'd done a boo-boo on one of my several jobs on the bike: trapped a wire under a bolt, or ran a cable for the quickshifter too close to a sharp edge. As I took more stuff off though, the problem was still there. Tank off, airbox off, shifter disconnected, still blowing. Power Commander off (although it's a completely different circuit), still boom.

I took the fairing lowers off, and then swapped the lithium battery back for the stock 12 volt (just to make everything as standard as possible), then took the tail unit off to check the tail light




TOTALLY WIRED



When did you last look at a wiring diagram? They've got a lot more, shall we say, involved, since bikes grew fuel injection, ABS, traction control and enormous banks of sensors. Even the old-school Busa soon has your eyes crossing when you check out the wiring diagrams. I spent half an hour getting to grips with it, and seeing just what is powered by the failing ignition fuse. The bones of it is the low-current side of the starter system, the fuel pump, ignition half of the ECU, and the sidelight and brakelight systems. Nothing too extensive in fact, and I was pretty sure there might be something for me up around the tail light, where I'd fitted a top box bracket. But nothing obvious there. Hmm.

wiring. Still nothing obvious in terms of wiring faults, but at some stage, the fuse stopped blowing. Brilliant! Well, 'bollocks' really. Because without finding a plausible fault, we're kinda back at stage one.

Stage one, with a bike that starts and runs fine, but has low confidence. The current plan is to get her back together, and take her for a series of rides round the block, staying within light pushing distance of home.

Or take her to a professional. Can my ego stand it? Well, I've been doing it for years now, so I guess one more indignity won't hurt. Best get my name down for a booking on the SuperBike van then... 



YAMAHA SR500

■ MODS: Loads, look! ■ MILES: 180 (in the van)

Progress! Finally. It may not look like it, but there have definitely been a few positive steps forward with the Yamaha SR500 Café Racer project. There's been a lot on lately and the danger with project bikes like this is that, once they get left in the corner they tend to stay in the corner. The perfect example of this would be me unearthing Big Dave Sonsky's '98 FireBlade in the old lockup in Croydon back in 2010. That bike hadn't turned a wheel in eight years. I dragged it out, sorted it out and eventually helped it find its way into someone else's corner. It's what project bikes do best. 'Not this one', he said confidently.

With the fabrication (I use that term very loosely) complete and the front wheel problem rectified, I've finally got to the stage that I've been looking forward to for ages. I needed to find some new bodywork. I spent ages online, looking at what other people had done while trying to find a solution. I found mine at Complete Café Racer in Sheffield. Tony Garnham-Parks is the boss, a lifelong bike tinkerer and former bike breaker. Tony admits to having one too many beers one night while watching American Chopper and realised that he could do something similar. Some scribbled maths on a piece of paper followed and three years later, business is bursting at the seams. I had to stick the frame and the tank in the van and run it up to Tony's workshop up the M1. I arrived unfashionably late but Tony didn't mind. Over a coffee he gave me a tour of his business. As well as turnkey café racers, he runs a very busy internet shop, selling everything

to do with café racers from exhausts to rear sets. It was a tank cover and tail unit that I was interested in. Like most children, once I got in the shop and saw the amount of choice, my eyes glazed with excitement and I didn't know what to go for first. We tried a couple of different styles, angular tanks that seemed to go on for miles, then stubby tanks full of angles and straight edges. In the end I settled on a Benelli style tank cover and a fastback style seat unit with a light recess. There's a possibility I'll need a custom tank making to fit under the cover, but the norm is to go for a cover that slots over your original tank. It was refreshing to see somebody that's into the whole café racer thing that doesn't feel the need to have a waxed 'tache and arms full of tattoos. Tony knew his stuff and was as passionate as they come when it comes to this kind of bike. Fingers crossed he'll be able to work his magic and I'll have somewhere to sit soon enough. Back in the workshop, Dyno Dan got bored of looking at the motor in the corner of his shop and went at it with both barrels. I nipped in to drop a bike off and the head was on the bench, the inlet had been ported and the exhaust freshly polished. I got excited and Dan got biscuits. Everyone's a winner!

Visit: www.caf racerseats.co.uk for all things café racer and Dan at www.dmpmotorcycles.com for anything bike related. **ST**



YAMAHA R1 RACEBIKE


■ **MODS:** Lots but still more to go ■ **MILES:** About 0.02, back and forth around the IDP workshop

■ **CONTACT:** www.idpmoto.com, www.bikersdiscountstore.co.uk

Ah, the SuperBike R1. Still here, still not finished. For those who've just tuned in, this is our R1 endurance racer that was, er, raced to within an inch of its life by the Northover brothers a couple of years ago. Since then it's been undergoing an intensive rebuild to save it from the scrap heap it was headed for after the three-crashes-in-two-days incident. But, rest assured, this is the last long break in the R1

coverage (we haven't seen it in the mag since January, oops) – it is going to be finished before the year is out. We had another day up at IDP Moto, chasing through the lengthy list of jobs to do and going mad adding new things to the list. So much so that we've had to adopt a new strategy – get it fixed and up and running before going nuts changing things. If this was a tune-up then the mods would be top of the list, but after

the R1's traumatic past, it needs rebuilding and testing before we worry about making it faster. Having said that, some things had to be replaced – things like the borrowed front master cylinder. Well, it'd be rude not to fit up a swanky Accossato master cylinder to replace it right? The Accossato unit has a slender lever blade that makes our fingers happy every time we touch it and, with a fresh batch of fluid, the R1 feels ready to out-brake everything and anything in its path. New clip-ons and Renthal grips have finished the cockpit nicely and with the new subframe on (the old one was in about twenty pieces) we actually had something to mount the fairing to.

Which brings us on to next month's job – fairing painting. We could flex our PR muscles and get a swanky paint job done, but we figure a bike like the R1 deserves a little more personal attention from us. Especially after what we put it through at Magny Cours. So it's a DIY paint job for the ol' Yamaha – tune in next month to see how we get on with that and how you can avoid all the mistakes we'll inevitably make. Although at the moment we don't seem to be able to get past arguing about which paint scheme to go for. Then all we need to do is fit the new screen courtesy of Skidmarx, fit the new coils, the crash protectors, the Samco hose kit and anything else we discover needs fixing between now and then. Now, will it be black and yellow speed blocks or another Ipone Yamaha France replica? Or a Marlboro rep? Or a Haga WSB rep? Or... 





LIVING WITH A LEGEND

Jeff Stone bought his Kawasaki ZZ-R1100 brand new. Over 22 years later he and it are still going strong



Kawasaki's ZZ-R1100 was launched in 1991 with a fanfare as the fastest production bike ever produced – so I had to have one didn't I?

Having owned a GPZ900 for six years I was already a Kawasaki convert but a test ride on a ZZ-R was all it took to convince me that this was the bike for me, so in August 1992, for £6,995, I took delivery of a shiny black C2 model from Ranger Kawasaki in Stafford.

Being careful, I followed the running-in instructions of not exceeding 4,000 (66 mph) for the first 500 miles. What a boring business that was, but I

was no longer bored when I got home and noticed the chain was far too tight and the back wheel out of alignment too. Worse still, when I got the tool kit out I found they'd given me one without the large Allen key for the rear eccentrics! I complained, refused to ride it the 53 miles back to Stafford so they sent a mechanic with said kit and he adjusted the chain.

Not a good start, but that was the only downside (other than a high-side – more on that later) in 22 years of ownership. During that time it has taken me all over Europe from Holland to San Marino with the Czech Republic thrown

in for good measure.

In fact it was coming back from an FIM Rally in the Czech Republic in 1994 on a German autobahn that I tested out the claimed 172 mph top speed. I was on my way to a friend's house near Saarbrücken and like most rides, things started fairly steady, but I soon came up behind a couple of German bikers, one on a ZXR750 with his lightweight jacket billowing up his back as I remember.

We were perhaps doing 90–100 but steadily increased that to perhaps around the 130 mark at which point I thought I'd clear off. It was a Sunday afternoon and to this day I can remember overtaking big



*"59k miles over
twenty odd
years and only
headlight bulbs
have let me
down"*

Merks at what was probably twice their speed, then on my right, the central reservation streaking passed on my left, an unreal, other worldly, tunnel-like sensation. The big Zed was smooth and un-fussed, but snatching an occasional glance at the speedo, I couldn't read the speed, all I could log was that the needle was well past the horizontal... That'll do I thought, this is getting silly, and when I stopped for fuel I could see that I had reached around an indicated 167mph. From the way the bike felt, there was more to come, but not that busy Sunday afternoon!

That's the thing with the ZZ-R; speed is effortless, but isn't everything. It's comfortable too, well it is for me, 6' 2" and 13½ stone. It's no lightweight at 238 kilos, but it handles amazingly well for all that. Not nimble but planted, it goes where you want. In fact in 1995 I thought I'd tackle a few track days on it,

starting with Mallory Park, then Brands Hatch and then Donington. Mallory saw me grinding away the right footrest around Gerards; Brands saw me leading a young Neil Hodgson for a few minutes (while he warmed up!) and Donington saw me flying acrobatically through the air as I high-sided coming out of the Melbourne Loop hairpin. Concussion, broken wrist, trashed helmet, suit, silencer and fairing – expensive! But not to be put off, I later attended the California Superbike School at Cadwell Park – and didn't come off!

For long distance work though it's been fabulous. Our daughter is a teacher and has worked in Spain and now France for over 20 years, so what better excuse for a long ride than a trip to Barcelona or Toulouse? In the '90s I used to travel Portsmouth-Cherbourg on the overnight ferry. A 6.00am start would see me on the road for the 612 mile ride to

just south of Toulouse. I kept off the autoroute, took sensible breaks and got to Vanessa's around 7.00pm. No aches and pains, just a bit tired!

In those 22 years and 59,000 miles of ownership, it's never let me down, in fact the only thing to actually break has been the headlight pilot bulb - twice! Early on I fitted a Scottoiler, which has kept chains sweet and in 1994 had it derestricted and Dynojetted plus a K&N air filter fitted. The only other mod has been a set of Venhill braided brake lines all round.

I've maintained it myself and other than regular oil and filter changes and greasing of the swinging arm bearings, wear and tear has meant:

- Three new chains
- Two sets of sprockets
- Seven sets of tyres
- Four sets of brake pads
- Two sets of plugs
- Two sets of rear wheel bearings
- Two cush drives
- Three batteries
- A set of fork seals
- Clutch slave cylinder seals
- Rebuilt rear shock
- Overhauled brake calipers

And that's it! Not bad...





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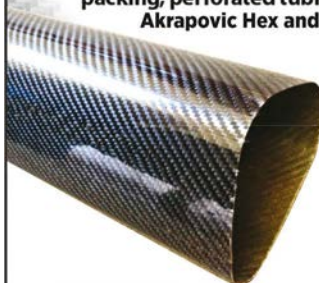
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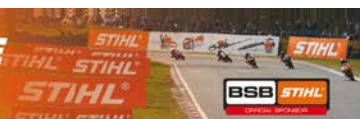
BSB FINAL ROUND

It was all to play for in the final round of BSB at Brands Hatch. The showdown format proved itself yet again. Not until the final day of the final round of the 2014 series would we know who would walk away with the BSB title. It was down to Ryuichi Kiyonari and Shane Byrne, both of whom had won the BSB title three times before. Whoever won would be known as the most winningest BSB champion in history. Nobody scripted a crash from both riders on the Saturday. Byrne walked away from his, Kiyonari wasn't so lucky.

Ultimately, Kiyo ruled himself out of the championship race and when Shakey won the first race on the second day, he bagged the championship at the same time. Emotions were running high, on his parade lap it was outside the Buildbase BMW garages that he stopped first. Commiserations to Kiyo and team given, the race one victory was dedicated to Milwaukee Yamaha rider Josh Brookes, who'd tried and failed to get a rise out of Shakey the day before. In the Saturday press conference and on social media, Brookes tried to find the right buttons to push to upset the Shakey freight train. He failed, the only champagne he got to taste was what was sprayed on him while he watched the podium celebrations go on in both Sunday races. Shakey bagged the lot, despite some awesome riding from Mainwaring, Bridewell and Ellison. With new teams, a new R1 and some fresh-faced management in the garages in 2015, the next few months can't pass quick enough.



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Knee buried and eyes
fixed on the prize,
Shakey owned Brands
Hatch



To the victor, a massive trophy!

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Jonathan Rea on the podium! Double yes!



WSB DOWN TO THE WIRE

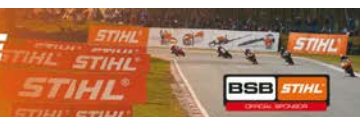
Magny-Cours was a wet one in more ways than one for championship leader Tom Sykes. Coming away with two fourth places in his pocket, Tom's lead in the championship is down to just 12 points over Sylvain Guintoli. "In race one that was the limit. I wanted to go faster but unfortunately we have had some

limitations for some time in wet conditions and we cannot just quite get to where we need to be. For race two we were also restricted by conditions. It was a big shame because we know I can go much, much faster. Given the conditions these results are better than I expected, so there is one bonus. I wanted to fight with Sylvain

and win the race but first I needed to finish the race. It could have been a lot worse but it could have been better. We are still in the best position in the championship so we need to go to Qatar and hopefully it lives up to its reputation as a desert and we will come out swinging."

By the time you read this, the

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Leon Haslam on the podium! Yes!

Struggling with grip in the damp conditions, Tom played it safe

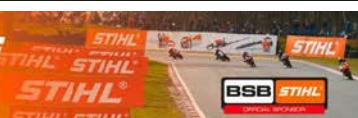
championship will have been decided. Win or lose, we're going to place a safe bet that Tom will ride his heart out, as he always does.

How cool was it to see Leon Haslam and Jonathan Rea both grab a podium as well. Despite struggling for wet grip, Rea lead the first race until Melandri and Guintoli got the better of him. "Magny-Cours has just got really slippery in recent years and today's conditions really highlighted that problem. It was satisfying to get on

the podium but I wanted to give a little bit more to try and win. So for race two my team gave me some good changes but we didn't quite solve the problem," said Rea in a post race press conference. Leon scored his first podium for the Pata Honda boys "It was quite difficult starting from the fourth row of the grid because I couldn't really see anything for the first few laps. By the time I got past a few guys the leaders had already gone. But I was really happy to beat Tom in the end – it

was one thing getting to him but quite another getting by. I passed him the first time on the brakes but started wheel spinning and lost all my drive. I felt that I had a lot better pace than him but he was being really defensive. I lost both wheels trying to go outside him at turn three and then tried again at the hairpin and ran wide. I was running out of laps though so to get by him and then open a gap made me quite happy. We can go to Doha in a month's time a little happier now."

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Is it just us, or does Rossi appear to be enjoying his racing again?



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Though the podium result was inevitable,
the racing was fantastic.

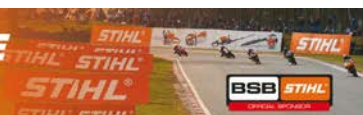
► MOTOGP

MARQUEZ IS MOTOGP

Jorge Lorenzo gave Marquez the cold shoulder heading into turn one at Sepang, leaving Marquez with it all to do and us with the gift of getting to watch him. Marquez came out of the turn in ninth position, by lap two he was third. The man is a beast. On the tenth lap, Rossi took the lead from Lorenzo while Pedrosa got busy in the kitty litter. When Marquez hit the front on lap 11 the race was all over bar the massive stand-up wheelie over the line. Marquez' 12th victory of the season was no less impressive than any of the others, whether he gets the opportunity to ride a Moto2 bike as well as his MotoGP bike at the final round as yet remains a mystery. Either way it's going

to be a hell of a post race party at the final round. "I'm really happy with the race. The strongest opponent was the weather, it was really hot! But yeah, it was difficult. At the start I was worried about the tyre life especially looking towards the end. I was not so good through turn one but then I started to overtake riders. I came back strong and I'm very happy to return to the win. I've equalled Mick Doohan's record, with one race left maybe I can beat it! If I had a bad result here the pressure in Valencia would be more. But now I am free in Valencia and I can do well for my fans and just enjoy it! I'll be giving all my luck to Alex (his brother) at Valencia,"

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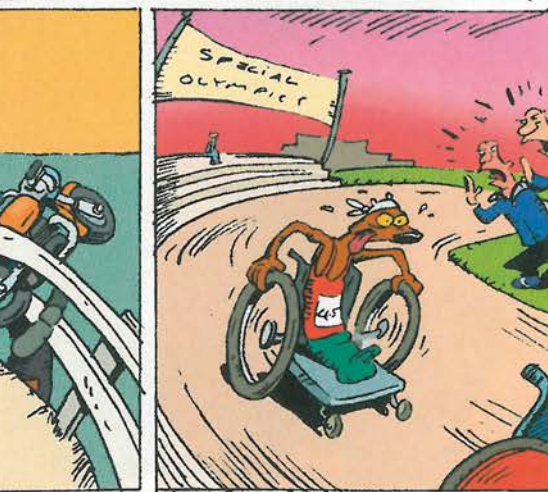
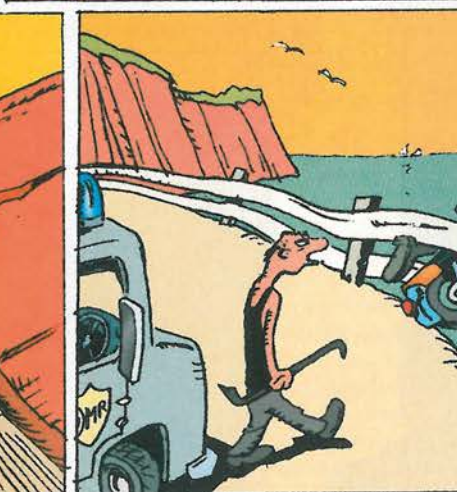
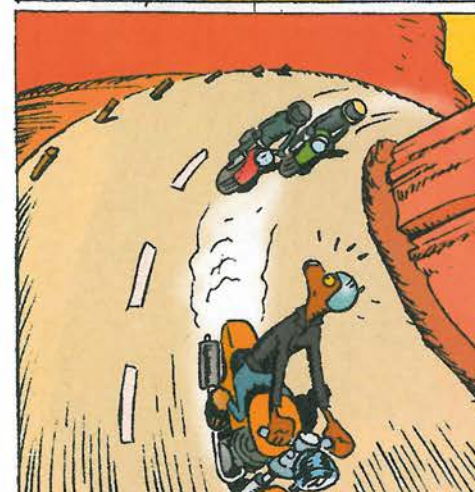
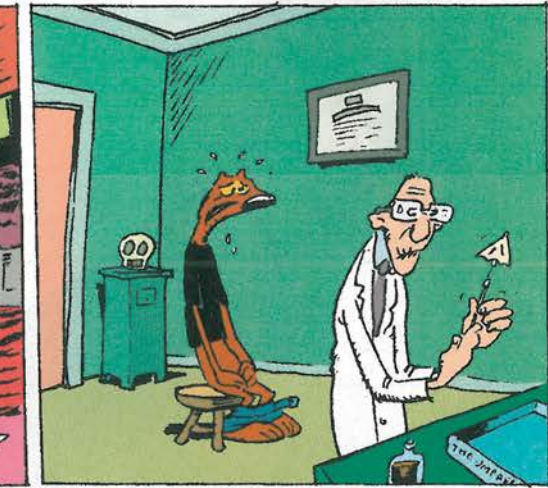
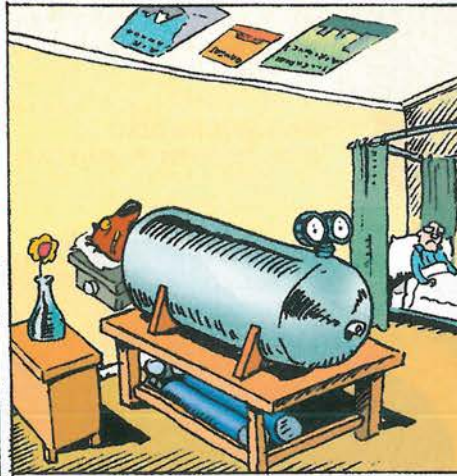
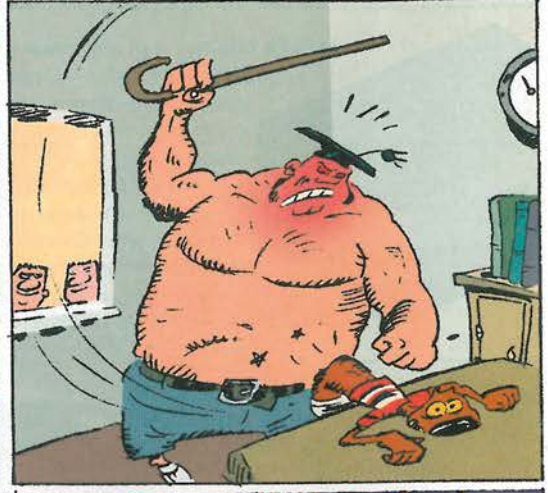


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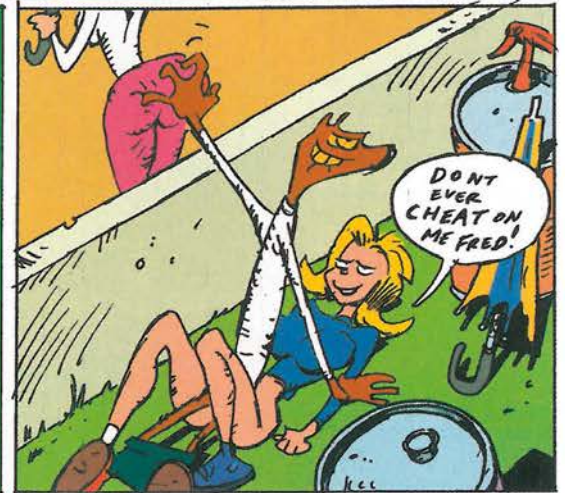
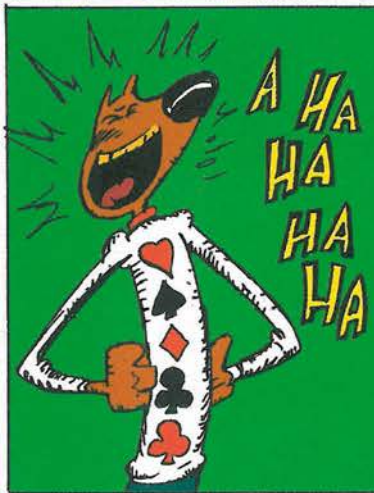
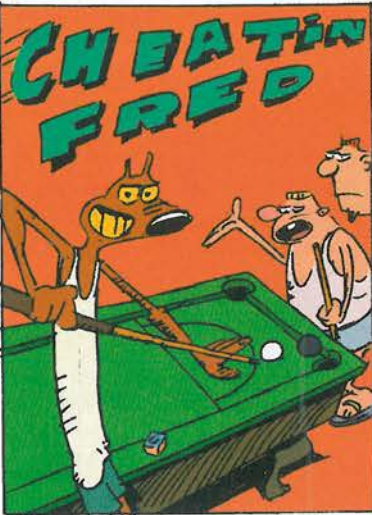
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Finish Line

Hear about the transvestite from Greater Manchester? He had a Wigan address



Blind luck

A blind man is walking down the street with his guide dog when it leads him smack into a post. Dazed, the blind man reaches into his pocket and fetches out a treat to feed the dog. A passer-by remarks, 'That's beautiful. Even after he's made a mistake like that you're giving him a treat.' 'Not really,' the blind man replies, 'I'm just trying to find out which end's which so I can kick him in the bollocks.'

S. Wonder

A reet laff

A Yorkshireman takes his cat to the vet to be neutered. 'Is it a tom?' asks the vet. 'No. It's in this box,' says the Yorkshireman.

W.Jitham

Never too late to learn

A man is staggering home drunk late one night when he's stopped by a policeman. 'What are you doing out at this time of night?' asks the officer. 'I'm going to a lecture,' replies the man. 'Really? Who's going to give a lecture at this hour?' asks the policeman. 'My wife,' replies the man.

Fu Neeguy

Sideways thinking

A police patrol is stationed outside a pub looking for drink drivers. At closing time, he sees a man stumble out of the door, trip on the kerb and spend five minutes looking for his keys. He gets into his car after several attempts and spends another five minutes trying to get the key in the ignition. By

this time, everyone else has left, the guy pulls away and the policeman pulls him over immediately to breathalyse him. The reading comes back as zero. 'That can't be right,' says the policeman. 'Yes it can,' says the man. 'Tonight I'm the designated decoy.'

R. Hammond

Stand together

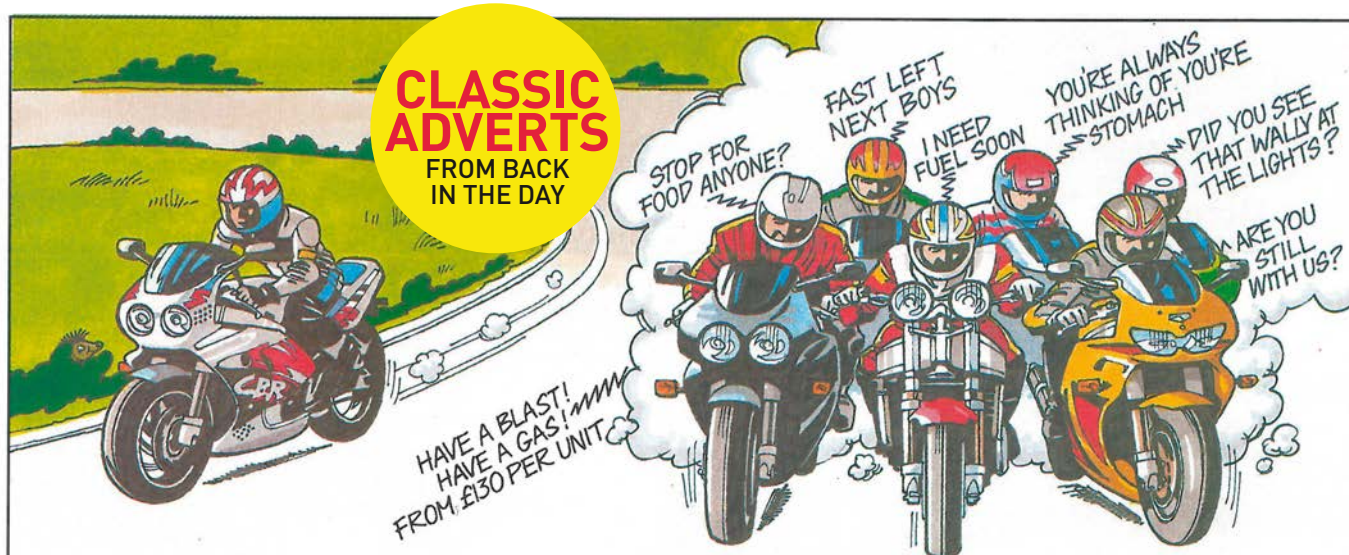
Dyslexics of the world, untie!

H. Rowrad

Too much?

You've got to make the little things count. That's why I teach arithmetic to dwarves.

Sleepy



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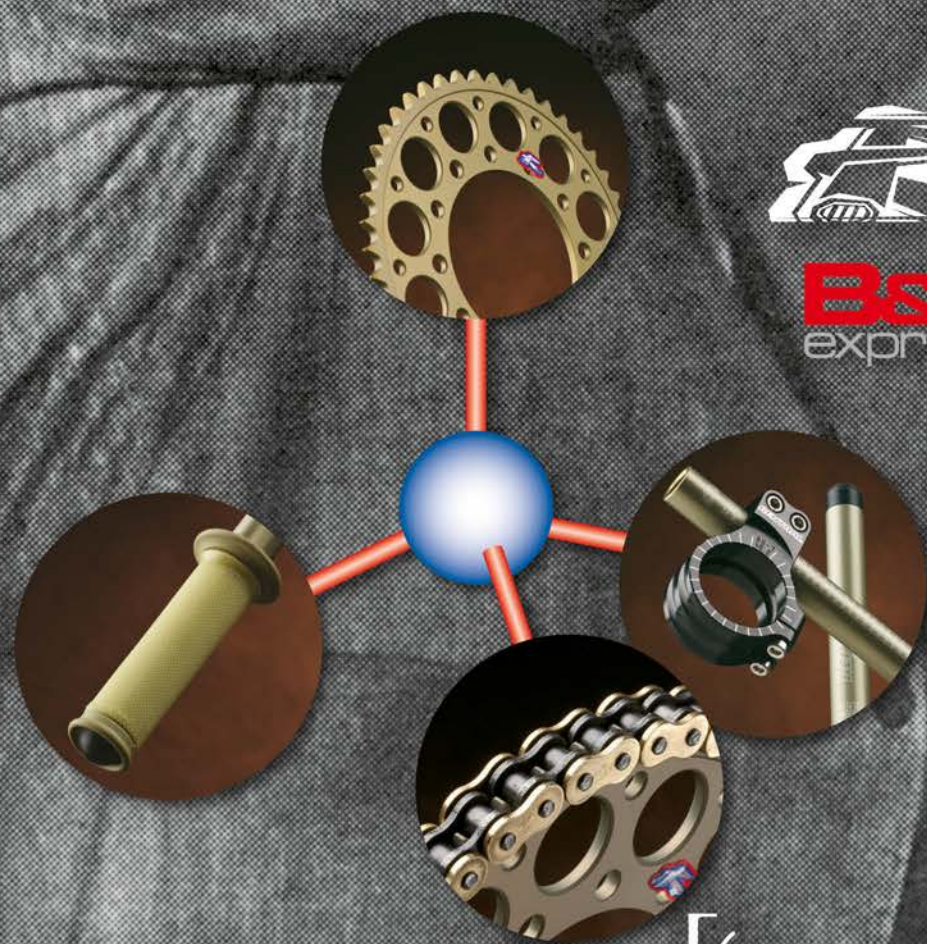
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